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Atherton, Gertrude
Rezanov.

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"But it cannot be! Surely, Excellency, you realize that?"
Page 187.

REZÁNOV

By

GERTRUDE ATHERTON

ILLUSTRATED IN WATER-COLORS

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TORONTO
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NEW YORK AND LONDON
THE AUTHORS AND NEWSPAPERS ASSOCIATION

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Composition and Electrotyping by
J. J. Little & Co.
Printed and bound by the
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TO

DELFINA DE LA GUERRA Y MORENO,

A FRIEND WHOM I GREATLY ADMIRE.

(Facsimile Page of Manuscript from RULERS OF KINGS)

REZÁNOV

I

As the little ship that had three times raced with death sailed past the majestic headlands and into the straits of San Francisco on that brilliant April morning of 1806, Rezánov forgot the bitter humiliations, the mental and physical torments, the deprivations and dangers of the past three years; forgot those harrowing months in the harbor of Nagasaki when the Russian bear had caged his tail in the presence of eyes aslant; his dismay at Kamchatka when he had been forced to send home another to vindicate his failure, and to remain in the Tsar's incontiguous and barbarous northeastern possessions as representative of his Imperial Majesty, and plenipotentiary of the Company his own genius had created; forgot the year of loneliness and hardship—and peril in whose jaws the bravest was impotent; forgot even his pitiable crew, diseased when he left Sitka, who had filled the *Juno* with their groans

and laments; and the bells of youth, long still, rang in his soul once more.

"It is the spring in California," he thought with a sigh, that curled at the edge. "However;" life had made him philosophical; "the moments of unreasonable happiness are the most enviable no doubt, for there is neither gall nor satiety in the reaction. All this is as enchanting as—well, as a woman's promise. What lies beyond? Illiterate and mercenary Spaniards, vicious natives, and boundless *ennui,* one may safely wager. But if all California is as beautiful as this, no man that had spent a winter in Sitka should ask for more."

In the extent and variousness of his travels Rezánov had seen Nature more awesome of feature but never more fair. On his immediate right as he sailed down the straits toward the narrow entrance to be known as the Golden Gate, there was little to interest save the surf and the masses of outlying rocks where the seals leapt and barked; the shore beyond was sandy and low. But on his left the last of the northern mountains rose straight from the water, the warm red of its deeply indented cliffs rich in harmony with the green of slope and height. There was not a tree;

the mountains, the promontories, the hills far down on the right beyond the sand dunes, looked like stupendous waves of lava that had cooled into every gracious line and fold within the art of relenting Nature; ages after, granted a light coat of verdure to clothe the terrible mystery of birth. The great bay, as blue and tranquil as a high mountain lake, as silent as if the planet still slept after the agonies of labor, looked to be broken by a number of promontories, rising from their point far out in the water to the high back of the land; but as the *Juno* pursued her slanting way down the channel Rezánov saw that the most imposing of these was but the end of a large island, and that scattered near were other islands, masses of rock like the castellated heights that rise abruptly from the plains of Italy and Spain; far away, narrower straits, with a glittering expanse beyond; while bounding the whole eastern rim of this splendid sheet of water was a chain of violet hills, with the pale green mist of new grass here and there, and purple hollows that might mean groves of trees crouching low against the trade winds of summer; in the soft pale blue haze above and beyond, the lofty volcanic peak of a mountain range. Not a human being, not

a boat, not even a herd of cattle was to be seen, and Rezánov, for a moment forgetting to exult in the length of Russia's arm, yielded himself to the subtle influence abroad in the air, and felt that he could dream as he had dreamed in a youth when the courts of Europe were as fabulous as El Dorado; in the immensity of ancestral seclusions.

"It is like the approach to paradise, is it not, Excellency?" a deferential voice murmured at his elbow.

The plenipotentiary frowned without turning his head. Dr. Langsdorff, surgeon and naturalist, had accompanied the Embassy to Japan, and although Rezánov had never found any man more of a bore and would willingly have seen the last of him at Kamchatka, a skilful dispenser of drugs and mender of bones was necessary in his hazardous voyages, and he retained him in his suite. Langsdorff returned his polite tolerance with all the hidden resources of his spleen; but his curiosity and scientific enthusiasm would have sustained him through greater trials than the exactions of an autocrat, whom at least he had never ceased to respect in the most trying moments at Nagasaki.

What he had taken for a pile of fallen rocks was a fort and a group of excited men at its gates. Page 9.

"Yes," said Rezánov. "But I wonder you find anything to admire in such unportable objects as mountains and water. I have not seen a living thing but gulls and seals, and God knows we had enough of both at Sitka."

"Ah, your excellency, in a land as fertile as this, and caressed by a climate that would coax life from a stone, there must be an infinite number of aquatic and aerial treasures that will add materially to the scientific lore of Europe."

"Humph!" said Rezánov, and moved his shoulder in an uncontrollable gesture of dismissal. But the spell of the April morning was broken, although the learned doctor was not to be the only offender.

The Golden Gate is but a mile in width and the swift current carried the *Juno* toward a low promontory from whose base a shrill cry suddenly ascended. Rezánov, raising his glass, saw that what he had taken to be a pile of fallen rocks, was a fort and that a group of excited men stood at its gates. Once more the plenipotentiary on a delicate mission, he ordered the two naval officers sailing the ship to come forward, and retired to the dignified isolation of the cabin.

The high-spirited young officers, who would

have raised a gay hurrah at the sight of civilized man had it not been for the awe in which they held their chief, saluted the Spaniards formally, then stood in an attitude of extreme respect; the *Juno* was directly under the guns of the fort.

One of the Spaniards raised a speaking trumpet and shouted:

"Who are you?"

No one on the *Juno,* save Rezánov, could speak a word of Spanish, but the tone of the query was its own interpreter. The oldest of the lieutenants, through the ship's trumpet, shouted back:

"The *Juno*—Sitka—Russian."

The Spanish officer made a peremptory gesture that the ship come to anchor in the shelter given by an immense angle of the mainland, of which the fort's point was the western extreme. The Russians, as befitted the peaceful nature of their mission, obeyed without delay. Before their resting place, and among the sand hills a mile from the beach, was a quadrangle of buildings some two hundred feet square and surrounded by a wall about fourteen feet high and seven feet thick. This they knew to be the Presidio. They saw the officers that had hailed them gallop over the hill behind the fort to the more ambitious

enclosure and, in the square, confer with another group that seemed to be in a corresponding state of excitement. A few moments later a deputation of officers, accompanied by a priest in the brown habit of the Franciscan order, started on horseback for the beach. Rezánov ordered Lieutenant Davidov and Dr. Langsdorff to the shore as his representatives.

The Spaniards wore the undress uniform of black and scarlet in which they had been surprised, but their peaked straw hats were decorated with cords of gold or silver, the tassels hanging low on the broad brim; their high deerskin boots were gayly embroidered, and bristled with immense silver spurs. The commanding officer alone had invested himself with a gala serape, a square of red cloth with a bound and embroidered slit for the head. Leading the rapid procession, his left hand rested significantly on his sword, he was a fine specimen of the young California grandee, dark and dashing and reckless, lithe of figure, thoroughbred, dissipated, and ardent. His eyes were sparkling at the prospect of excitement; not only had the Russians, by their nefarious appropriation of the northwestern corner of the continent and a recent piratical excursion in

pursuit of otter, inspired the Spanish Government with a profound disapproval and mistrust, but a rumor had run up the coast that made every sea-gull look like the herald of a hostile fleet. This was young Argüello's first taste of command, and life was dull on the northern peninsula; he would have welcomed a declaration of war.

Davidov and Langsdorff had come to shore in one of the *Juno's* canoes. The conversation was held in Latin between the two men of learning.

"Who are you and whence come you?" asked the priest.

Langsdorff, who had been severely drilled by the plenipotentiary as to text, replied with a profound bow: "We are Russians engaged in completing the circumnavigation of the globe. It was our intention to go directly to Monterey and present our official documents as well as our respects, to your illustrious Governor, but owing to contrary winds and a resultant scarcity of provisions, we were under the necessity of putting into the nearest harbor. The *Juno* is navigated by Lieutenant Davidov and Lieutenant Khovstov, of the Imperial Navy of Russia; by gracious permission associated with the Marine

of the Russo-American Company." He paused a moment and then swept out his trump card with a magnificent flourish: "Our expedition is in command of His Excellency, Privy Counsellor and Grand Chamberlain Baron Rezánov, late Ambassador to the Court of Japan, Plenipotentiary of the Russo-American Company, Imperial Inspector of the extreme eastern and northwest American dominions of His Imperial Majesty, Alexander the First, Emperor of all the Russias, whose representative in these waters he is."

The Spaniards were properly impressed as the priest translated with the glibness of the original; but Argüello, who now announced himself as Comandante ad interim of the Presidio of San Francisco during the absence of his father at Monterey, nodded sagely several times and then held a short conference in Spanish with the interpreter. The priest turned to the Russians with a smile as diplomatic as that which Rezánov had drilled upon the ugly ingenuous countenance of his medicine man.

"Our illustrious Governor, Don José Arrillaga, received word from the court of Spain, now quite two years ago, of the sailing in 1803 from Kronstadt of the ships *Nadeshda* and *Neva,* in

command of Captain Krusenstern and Captain Lisiansky, the former having on board the illustrious Ambassador to Japan, the Privy Counsellor and Chamberlain de Rezánov. It was expected that these ships would touch at more than one of His Most Holy Catholic Majesty's vast dominions, and all viceroys and gobernador proprietarios were alike instructed to receive the exalted representative of the mighty Emperor of Russia with hospitality and respect. But we cannot understand why his excellency comes to us so late and in so small a ship, rather than in the state with which he sailed from Europe."

"The explanation is simple, my father. The original ships, from a variety of circumstances, were, upon our arrival at Kamchatka, at the conclusion of the embassy to Japan, under the necessity of returning at once to Europe. His Imperial Majesty, Alexander the First, ordered the Chamberlain and plenipotentiary, the representative of imperial power in the Russo-American possessions, to remove to the *Juno* for the purpose of visiting the Kurile and Aleutian Islands, Kadiak and the northwestern coast of America." The Tsar had never heard of the *Juno,* but as Rezánov was practically his august

self in these far away waters, there was enough of truth in this statement to appease the conscience of a subordinate.

The Spaniards were satisfied. Lieutenant Argüello begged that the emissaries would return to the ship and invite the Chamberlain and his party to come at once to the Presidio and do it the honor to partake of the poor hospitality it afforded. An officer galloped furiously for horses.

A few moments later they were still more deeply impressed by the appearance of their distinguished visitor as he stood erect in the boat that brought him to shore. In full uniform of dark green and gold lace, with cocked hat and the splendid order of St. Ann on his breast, Rezánov was by far the finest specimen of a man the Californians, themselves of ampler build than their European ancestors, had ever beheld. Of commanding stature and physique, with an air of highest breeding and repose, he looked both a man of the great world and an intolerant leader of men. His long oval face was thin and somewhat lined, the mouth heavily moulded and closely set, suggestive of sarcasm and humor; the nose long, with arching and flexible nostrils.

His eyes, seldom widely opened, were light blue, very keen, usually cold. Like many other men of his position in Europe, he had discarded wig and queue and wore his short fair hair unpowdered.

It was a singularly imposing but hardly attractive presence, thought young Argüello, until Rezánov, after stepping on shore and bowing formally, suddenly smiled and held out his hand. Then the impressionable Spaniard "melted like a woman," as he told his sister, Concha, and would have embraced the stranger on either cheek had not awe lingered to temper his enthusiasm. But Rezánov never made a stancher friend than Luis Argüello, who vowed to the last of his fortunate life that the one man who had fulfilled his ideal of the grand seigneur was he that sailed in from the North on that fateful April morning of 1806.

II

As Rezánov, heading the procession with young Argüello, entered the wide gates of the Presidio, he received an impression memorably different from that which led earlier travellers to describe it inclemently as a large square surrounded by mud houses thatched with reeds. It is true that the walls were of adobe and the roofs of tule; nor was there a tree on the sand hills encircling the stronghold. But in this early springtime—the summer of the peninsula—the hills showed patches of verdure, and all the low white buildings were covered by a network of soft dull green and archaic pink. The Castilian rose, full and fluted, and of a chaste and penetrating fragrance, hung singly and in clusters on the pillars of the dwellings, on the barracks and chapel, from the very roofs; bloomed upon bushes as high as young trees. The Presidio was as delicately perfumed as a lady's bower, and its cannon faced the ever-changing hues of water and island and hill.

As the party approached, heads of all ages

appeared between the vines and there was a low murmur of irrepressible curiosity and delight.

"We do not see many strangers in this lonely land," said Argüello apologetically. "And never before have we had so distinguished a guest as your excellency. It was always a gala day when even a Boston skipper came in with a few bales of goods and a complexion like the hides we sold him. Now, alas! they are no longer permitted to enter our ports. Governor Arrillaga will have none of contraband trade and slaying of our otter. And as for Europeans other than Spaniards, save for an English sea-captain now and then, they know naught of our existence."

But Rezánov had not come to California on the impulse of a moment. He replied suavely: "There you are mistaken. Your illustrious father, Don José Mario de Argüello, is well known to us as the most respected, eminent and influential character in the Californias. It was my intention, after paying a visit of ceremony to his excellency, Governor Arrillaga, to come to San Francisco for the sole purpose of meeting a man whose record has inspired me with the deepest interest. And we have all heard such wonderful tales of your California, of its beauty,

its fertility, of the beneficent lives of your missionaries—so different from ours!—and of the hospitality and elegance of the Spaniards, that it has been the objective point of my travels, and I have found it difficult to curb my impatience while attending to imperative duties elsewhere."

"Ay, señor!" exclaimed the young Californian. "What you say fills me with a pride I cannot express, and I can only regret that the reports of our poor habitations should be so sadly exaggerated. Such as our possessions are, however, they are yours while you deign to remain in our midst. This is my father's house. I beg that you will regard it as your own. Burn it if you will!" he cried with more enthusiasm than commonly enlivened the phrases of hospitality. "He will be proud to know that a lifetime of severe attention to duty and of devotion to his King have won him fame abroad as well as at home. He has risen to his present position from the ranks, but he is of pure Spanish blood, not a drop of Indian; and my mother was a Moraga, of the best blood of Spain," he added artlessly. "As to the beauty and variety of our country, señor, of course you will visit our luxuriant south; but——" They had dismounted

at the Comandante's house in the southeast corner of the square. Argüello impulsively led Rezánov back to the gates and pointed to the east. "I have crossed those mountains and the mountains beyond, Excellency, and seen fertile and beautiful valleys of a vast extent, watered by five rivers and bounded far, far away by mountains covered with snow and gigantic trees. The valley beyond the southern edge of the bay, where the Missions of Santa Clara and San José are, is also rich, but those between the two ranges are an empire; and one day when the King sends us more colonists, we shall recompense Spain for all she has lost."

"I congratulate you!" Rezánov, indifferent to his host's ancestral lode, had lifted an alert ear. His quick incisive brain was at work. "I should like to stretch my legs over a horse for a week at a time, and even to climb your highest mountains. You may imagine how much exercise a man may get on a vessel of two hundred and six tons, and it is thirty-two days since I left Sitka. To look upon a vast expanse of green—to say nothing of possible sport—after a winter of incessant rain and impenetrable forests—what a prospect! I beg you will take me off into the wilderness as soon as possible."

"I promise you the Governor shall not withhold his consent—and there are bear and deer—quail, wild duck—your excellency will enjoy that beautiful wild country as I have done." Argüello was enchanted at the prospect of fresh adventure in the company of this fascinating stranger. "But we are once more at our poor abode, señor. I beg that you will remember it is your own."

They ascended the steps of the piazza, suddenly deserted, and it seemed to Rezánov that every sense in his being quivered responsively to the poignant sweetness of the Castilian roses. He throbbed with a sudden exultant premonition that he stood on the threshold of an historic future, a pagan joy in mere existence, a sudden rush of desire for the keen wild happiness of youth. Such is the elixir of California in the north and the spring.

They entered a long sala typical of its day and of many to come; whitewashed walls hung with colored prints of the Virgin and saints; horsehair furniture, matting, deep window seats; and a perennial coolness. The Chamberlain (his court title and the one commonly attached to his name) made himself as comfortable as the slippery chair would permit, and Argüello went for his mother.

Langsdorff, who had lingered on the piazza with the priest, entered in a moment.

"The good padre tells me that this rose of Castile is the only imported flower in California," he cried with enthusiasm, for although not a botanist there was a bump between his eyes as big as a child's fist and he had a nose like the prow of a toy ship. "Many cuttings were brought from Spain——"

"What difference does it make where it came from?" interrupted Rezánov, testily. "Is it not enough that it is beautiful, but it must have a pin stuck through it like some poor devil of a butterfly?"

"Your excellency has also the habit to probe into things he deems worthy of his attention," retorted the offended scientist; but he was obliged to closet his wrath. An inner door opened and the host reappeared with his mother and a fair demonstration of her virtues. She was a very large woman dressed loosely in black, but she carried herself with an air of complete, if somewhat sleepy, dignity, and it was evident that her beauty had been great. Her full face had lost its contours, but time had spared the fine Roman nose and the white skin, that birthright of the

high-bred Castilian. Argüello presented his family ceremoniously as the guest of honor rose and bowed with formal deference.

"My mother, Doña Ignacia Argüello, your excellency, who unites with me in praying that you will regard our home as yours during your sojourn in the north. My sister, Maria de la Concepcion Marcella Argüello, and my little sisters, Ana Paula and Gertrudes Rudisinda. My brothers: Gervasio—soldado distinguido of the San Francisco Company; Santiago, a cadet in the same company; Francesco and Toribio, whose presence at the table I beg you will overlook, for when we are so fortunate as to be all together, señor, we cannot bear to be separated. My oldest brother, alas!—Ignacio—is studying for holy orders in Mexico, and my sister Isabel visits at the Presidio of Santa Barbara. I beg that you will be seated, Excellency." And he continued the introduction to the lesser luminaries, with equal courtesy but fewer periods.

Rezánov exchanged a few pleasant words with his smiling hostess before she returned to her distracted maids preparing the dinner; but his eyes during Argüello's declamation had wandered with a singular fidelity to the beautiful face

of the eldest daughter of the house. She had responded with a humorous twinkle in her magnificent black eyes and not a hint of diffidence. As she entered the room his brain had flashed out the thought: "Thank heaven for a pretty girl after these three abominable years." Possibly his pleasure would have been salted with pique had he guessed that her thought was the twin of his own. He was the first man of any world more considerable than the petty court of the viceroy of Mexico that had visited California in her time, and excellent as she found his tall military figure and pale cold face, the novelty of the circumstance fluttered her more.

Doña "Concha" Argüello was the beauty of California, and although her years were but sixteen her blood was Spanish, and she carried her tall deep figure and fine head with the grace and dignity of an accomplished woman. She had inherited the white skin and delicate Roman-Spanish profile of the Moragas, but there was an intelligent fire in her eyes, a sharp accentuation of nostril, and a full mobility of mouth, childish, half-developed as that feature still was, that betrayed a strong cross-current forcing the placid maternal flow into rugged and unexplored chan-

nels, while assimilating its fine qualities of pride and high breeding. Gervasio and Santiago resembled their sister in coloring and profile, but lacked her subtle quality of personality and divine innocence. Luis was more the mother's son than the father's—saving his olive skin; a grandee, modified by the simplicities of a soldier's life, amiable and upright. Doña Ignacia recognized in Concha the quintessence of the two opposing streams, and had long since ceased to impose upon a girl who had little else but her liberties the ordinary restraints of the Spanish maiden. Concha had already received many offers of marriage and regarded men as mere swingers of incense. Moreover, her cultivated mind was filled with ideals and ideas far beyond anything California would yield in her day.

As Rezánov, upon Doña Ignacia's retreat, walked directly over to her, she smilingly seated herself on a sofa and swept aside her white voluminous skirts. She was not sure that she liked him, but in no doubt whatever of her delight at his advent.

Her manners were very simple and artless, as are the manners of most women whom Nature has gifted with complexity and depth.

"It is now two years and more that we have been excited over the prospect of this visit," she said. "But if you will tell me what you have been doing all this time I, at least, will forgive you; for you will never be able to imagine, señor, how I long to hear of the great world. I stare at the map, then at the few pictures we have, I know many books of travel by heart; but I am afraid my imagination is a poor one, for I cannot conjure up great cities filled with people—thousands of people! Dios de mi alma! A world where there is something besides mountains and water, grain fields, orchards, forests, earthquakes and climate! Will you, señor?"

"For quite as many hours as you will listen to me. I propose a compact. You shall improve my Spanish. I will impart all I know of Europe —and of Asia—if your curiosity reaches that far."

"Even of Japan?" There was a wicked sparkle in her eye.

"I see you already have some knowledge of the cause of my delay." His voice was even, but a wound smarted. "It is quite true, señorita, that the first embassy to Japan, from which we hoped so much, was a humiliating failure, and

that I was played with for six months by a people whom we had regarded as a nation of monkeys. When my health began to suffer from the long confinement on shipboard—we had previously been fourteen months at sea—and I asked to be permitted to live on shore while my claims to an audience were under consideration, I was removed with my suite to a cage on a strip of land nearly surrounded with water, where I had less liberty and exercise than on shipboard. Finally, I had a ridiculous interview with a 'great man,' in which I accomplished nothing but the preservation of what personal dignity a man may while sitting on his heels; the superb presents of the Tsar were returned to me, and I was politely told to leave; Japan wanted neither the friendship of Russia nor her gimcracks. That, señorita, is the history of the first Russian Embassy—for the tentative visit of Adam Lanxmann, twelve years before, can be dignified by no such title—to Oriental waters. It is to be hoped that Count Golofkin, who was to undertake a similar mission to China, has met with a better fate."

Underneath the polished armor of a man who was a courtier when he chose and the dominating

spirit always, he was hot and quick of temper. His light cold eyes glowed with resentment at the dancing lights in hers, as he cynically gave her a bald abstract of the unfortunate mission. He reflected that commonly he would have fitted a different mask to the ugly skull of fact, but this young barbarian, as he chose to regard her, excited the elemental truth in him, defying him to appear at his worst. He was astonished to see her eyes suddenly soften and her mouth tremble.

"It must have been a hateful experience—hateful!" Her voice, beginning on its usual low soft note, rose to a hoarse pitch of indignation. "I should have killed somebody! To be a man, and strong, and caressed all one's life by fortune—and to be as helpless as an Indian! Madre de Dios!"

"I shall take my revenge," said Rezánov shortly; but the wound closed, and once more he became aware of the poignant sweetness of Castilian roses. Concha wore one in her soft dusky hair, and another where the little round jacket of white linen, gayly embroidered with pink, met on her bosom. But if sentiment tempted him, he was quickly poised by her next remarks. She uttered them in a low tone, although the animated con-

versation of the rest of the party—Davidov alone romping on the piazza with the children—would have permitted the two on the sofa to exchange the vows of love unheard.

"But what a practice for your diplomatic talents, Excellency! Poor California! At least let me be the first to hear what you have come for?" Her voice dropped to a soft cooing note, although her eyes twinkled. "For the love of God, señor! I am so bored in this life on the edge of the world! To see the seams and ravellings of a diplomatic intrigue! I have read and heard of many, but never had I hoped to link my finger in anything subtler than a quarrel between priest and Governor, or the jealousy of Los Angeles for Monterey. I even will help you—if you mean no harm to my father or my country. And I am not a friend to scorn, señor, for my blessed father is as wax in my hands, the dear old governor adores me, and even Padre Abella, who thinks himself a great diplomat, and is watching us out of the corner of his eye, while I make him believe you pay me so many compliments my poor little head turns round—Bueno señor!" As she raised her voice she plucked the rose from her dress and tossed it to

Rezánov. Then she lifted her chin and pouted her childish lips at the ironical smile of the priest.

Rezánov was close to betraying his surprise; but as he cherished a belief that the souls of all pretty women went to school to the devil before entering upon earthly enterprise, he wondered that he had been open to the illusion of complete ingenuousness in a descendant of one of the oldest and subtlest civilizations of Earth. Within that luminous shell of youth there were, no doubt, whispering memories of men and women steeped in court intrigue to the eyes, of triumphant beauties that had lived for love and their power over the passions of men as ardent as himself. It was quite possible that she might be as useful as she desired. But his impulses were in leash. He merely looked and murmured his admiration.

"Better ask, what chance have I, a defenceless man, who has not seen a charming woman for three years, against such practised art? If you can hoodwink a Spanish priest, and manipulate a Governor who has won the confidence of the most suspicious court in Europe, what fortune for a barbarian of the north? Less than with Japan, I should think."

He divested the rose of its thorns and many tight little buds, and thrust the stem underneath the star of St. Ann. She lifted her chin again and tossed her head.

"You do not trust me, but you will. I fancy it will be before long—for it is quite true that the Californians are not so easily outwitted. And —even did I not help you, I would not—I vow, señor!—betray you. Is it true that Russia is at war with Spain?"

"What?"

"Have you not heard? It was for that we were all so excited this morning. We thought your ship might be the first of a fleet."

"I have heard no such rumor, and you may dismiss it. Russia is too much occupied with Napoleon Bonaparte, who has had himself crowned Emperor and by this time is probably at war with half Europe——"

She interrupted him with flashing eyes. The pink in her cheeks had turned red. The thin nostrils of her pretty Roman nose fluttered like paper. "Ah!" she exclaimed, again with that note of hoarseness in her voice. "There is a great man, not a mere king on a throne his ancestors made for him. Papa hates him because

he has seized a throne. Ay yi! Dios! you should hear the words fly when we go to war together. But I do not care that "—she snapped her firm white fingers—" for all the Bourbons that are in Europe. Bonaparte! Do you know him? Have you seen him? "

" I have seen him insult poor Markov, our ambassador to France, when I can assure you that he looked like neither a demi-god nor a gentleman. When you have improved my Spanish I will tell you many anecdotes of him. Meanwhile, am I to assume that you reserve your admiration for the man that carves his career in defiance of the rusty old machinery? "

" I do! I do! My father was of the people, a poor boy. He has risen to be the most powerful of all Californians, although the King he adores never makes him Gobernador Proprietario. I tell him he should be the first to recognize the genius and the ambitions of a Bonaparte. The mere thought horrifies him. But in me that same strong plebeian blood makes another cry, and if my father had but enough men at his back, and the will to make himself King of the Californias —Madre de Dios! how I should help him! "

" At least I know her better than she knows

me,'' thought Rezánov, as the inner door was thrown open and another bare room with a long table laden with savory food on a superb silver service was revealed. '' And if I know anything of women I can trust her—for as long as she may be necessary, at all events.''

III

"SANTIAGO!" whispered Concha. "Do not go down to the ship. Take me for a walk. I have much to say."

Santiago, who had not been asked to form one of the escort upon the return of the Russians to the *Juno* for the night, felt injured and sulky, and deigned no reply.

"If you do not, I'll not braid your hair to-morrow," said his sister, giving his arm a little shake; and he succumbed. The luxuriant tresses of the male Argüellos were combed and braided and tied with a ribbon every morning by the women of the family, and Concha's fingers were the gentlest and deftest. And Concha and Santiago were more intimate than even the rest of that united family. They had studied and read together, were equally dissatisfied with their narrow existence, ambitious for a wider experience. Santiago consoled himself with cards and training roosters for battle, and otherwise as a man may. He was but fifteen, this haughty severe-looking young hidalgo, but while in some respects

many years older than his sister, in others he was younger, for he possessed none of her illuminating instinct.

She led him through a postern gate, round the first of the dunes, and they were alone in a waste of sand. Then she demanded abruptly:

"What do you think of our illustrious visitor?"

"I like him. He would wring your neck if you got in his way, but has a kind heart for those that call him master. I like that sort of a man. I wish he would take me away with him."

"He shall—one of these days. Santiago mio, let me whisper——" She pulled his ear down to her lips. "He will marry me. I feel it. I know it. He has talked to me the whole day. He has told me grave secrets. Not even to you would I reveal them. So many have loved me—why should not he? I shall live in St. Petersburg, and see all Europe!—thousands of people—Dios mio! Dios mio!"

"Indeed!" Santiago, still unamiable, responded to this confidence with a sneer. "You aspire very high for a little girl of the wilderness, without fortune, and only half a coat-of-arms, so to speak. Do you know that this Rezánov—Dr.

Langsdorff has told us all about him—is a great noble, one of the ten barons of Russia, and a Chamberlain not merely by the accident of birth as in Austria or Germany, but in accordance with a decree of Peter the Great that court titles should be bestowed as a reward for distinguished services alone? He got a fortune in his youth by marriage with a daughter of Shelikov—that Siberian who founded the Russian colonies in America. The wife died almost immediately, but the Baron's influence remained with Shelikov—for his influence at court was even greater—and after the older man's death, with his mother-in-law, who is uncommonly clever. Shelikov's schemes were but sketches beside Rezánov's, who from merely a courtier and a gay blood about town developed into a great man of business, with an ambition to correspond. It was he who got the Imperial ukase that gave the Russian-American Company its power to squeeze all the other fur hunters and traders out of the northeast, and make Rezánov and everybody belonging to it so rich your head would swim if I told you the number of doubloons they spend in a year. Nobody has ever been so clever at managing those old beasts of autocrats as he. They think him merely the accomplished

courtier, a brilliant dilettante, a condescending patron of art and letters, a devotee of pleasure, and all the time he is pulling their befuddled old intellects about to suit himself. The Tsar Paul was a lunatic and they murdered him, but meanwhile he signed the ukase. The Tsar Alexander, who is not so bad nor so silly as the others, thinks there is no man so clever as Rezánov, who addresses him personally when sending home his reports. Do you know what all that means? Your plenipotentiary is not only a chamberlain at court, a privy counsellor, and the Tsar himself on this side of the world, but when his inspections and reforms are concluded, and he is one of the wealthiest men in Russia, he will return to St. Petersburg and become so high and mighty that a princess would snap at him. And you aspire! I never heard such nonsense."

"His excellency told me much of this," replied Concha imperturbably. "And I am sure that he cares nothing for princesses and will marry whom he most admires. He would not say, but I know he cared nothing for that poor little wife, dead so long ago. It was a mariage de convenance, such as all the great world is accustomed to. He will love me more than all the fine ladies

he has ever seen. I feel it! I know it! And I am quite happy."

"Do you love him?" asked Santiago, looking curiously at his sister's flushed and glowing face. It seemed to him that she had never looked so young. "Many have loved you. I had begun to think you had no heart for men, no wish for anything but admiration. And now you give your heart in a day to this Russian—who must be nearly forty—unasked."

"I have not thought of my heart at all. But I could love him, of course. He is so handsome, so kind, so grand, so gay! But love is for men and wives—has not my mother said so? Now I think only of St. Petersburg! of Paris! of London! of the beautiful gowns and jewels I shall wear at court—a red velvet train as long as a queen's, and all embroidered with gold, a white veil spangled with gold, a head-dress a foot high studded with jewels, ropes of diamonds and pearls—I made him tell me how the great ladies dressed. Ah! there is the pleasure of being a girl—to think and dream of all those beautiful things, not of when the wife must live always for the husband and children. That comes soon enough. And why should I not have all! all!—

there is so little in life for the girl. It seems to me now that I have had nothing. When he asks me to marry him he will tell me of the fine things I shall have and the great sights I shall witness—the ceremonies at court, the winter streets—with snow—snow, Santiago!—where the great nobles drive four horses through the drifts like little hills and are wrapped in furs like bears! The grand military parades—how I shall laugh when I think of our poor little Presidios with their dozen officers strutting about——'' She stopped abruptly and bursting wildly into tears flung herself into her brother's arms. '' But I never could leave you! And my father! my mother! all! all! Ay, Dios de mi alma! what an ingrate I am! I should die of homesickness! My Santiago! My Santiago!''

Santiago patted her philosophically. '' You are not going to-morrow,'' he reminded her. '' Don't cross your bridges until you come to them. That is a good proverb for maids and men. You might take us all with you, or spend every third year or so in California. No doubt you would need the rest. And meanwhile remember that the high and mighty Chamberlain has not yet asked for the honor of an alliance with the house of Ar-

güello, and that your brother will match his best fighting cock against your new white lace mantilla from Mexico, that he is not meditating any project so detrimental to his fortunes. Console yourself with the reflection that if he were, our father and the priests, and the Governor himself, would die of apoplexy. He is a heretic —a member of the Greek Church! Hast thou lost thy reason, Conchita? Dry your eyes and come home to sleep, and let us hear no more of marriage with a man who is not only a barbarian of the north and a heretic, but so proud he does not think a Californian good enough to wash his decks."

IV

It was long before Rezánov slept that night. The usual chill had come in from the Pacific as the sun went down and the distinguished visitor had intimated to his hosts that he should like to exercise on shore until ready for his detested quarters; but Argüello dared not in the absence of his father invite the foreigner even to sleep in the house so lavishly offered in the morning; although he had sent such an abundance of provisions to the ship that the poor sailors were deep in sleep, gorged like boa-constrictors; and he could safely promise that while the *Juno* remained in port her larder should never be empty. He shared the evening bowl of punch in the cabin, then went his way lamenting that he could not take his new friends with him.

Rezánov paced the little deck of the *Juno* to keep his blood in stir. There was no moon. The islands and promontories on the great sheet of water were black save for the occasional glow of an Indian camp-fire. There was not a sound but the lapping of the waves, the roar of distant

breakers. The great silver stars and the little green stars looked down upon a solitude that was almost primeval, yet mysteriously disturbed by the restless currents in the brain of a man who had little in common with primal forces.

Rezánov was uneasy on more scores than one. He was annoyed and mortified at the discovery—made over the punch bowl—that the girl he had taken to be twenty was but sixteen. It was by no means his first experience of the quick maturity of southern women—but sixteen! He had never wasted a moment on a chit before, and although he was a man of imagination, and notwithstanding her intelligence and dignity, he could not reconcile properties so conflicting with any sort of feminine ideal.

And the pressing half of his mission he had confided to her! No man knew better than he the value of a tactful and witty woman in the political dilemmas of life; more than one had given him devoted service, nor ever yet had he made a mistake. After several hours spent in the society of this clever politic dissatisfied girl he had come to the conclusion that he could trust her, and had told her of the lamentable condition of the creatures in the employ of the Russian-

American Company; of their chronic state of semi-starvation, of the scurvy that made them apathetic of brain and body, and eventually would exterminate them unless he could establish reciprocal trade relations with California and obtain regular supplies of farinaceous food; acknowledged that he had brought a cargo of Russian and Boston goods necessary to the well-being of the Missions and Presidios, and that he would not return to the wretched people of Sitka, at least, without a generous substitute of breadstuffs, dried meats, peas, beans, barley and tallow. Not only had he no longer the courage to witness their misery, but his fortune and his career were at stake. His entire capital was invested in the company he had founded, and he had failed in his embassy to Japan—to the keenest mortification of the Tsar and the jubilance of his enemies. If he left the Emperor's northeastern dominions unreclaimed and failed to rescue the Company from its precarious condition, he should hardly care to return to St. Petersburg.

Doña Concha had listened to this eloquent harangue—they sat alone at one end of the long sala while Luis at the other toiled over letters to the Governor and his father advising them of the

formidable honor of the Russian's visit—in exactly the temper he would have chosen. Her fine eyes had melted and run over at the moving tale of the sufferings of the servants of the Company—until his own had softened in response and he had impulsively kissed her hand; they had dilated and flashed as he spoke of his personal apprehensions; and when he had given her a practical explanation of his reasons for coming to California she had given him advice as practical in return.

He must withhold from her father and the Governor the fact of his pressing need; they were high officials with an inflexible sense of duty, and did all they could to enforce the law against trading with foreigners. He was to maintain the fiction of belting the globe, but admit that he had indulged in a dream of commercial relations—for a benefit strictly mutual—between neighbors as close as the Spanish and Russians in America. This would interest them—what would not, on the edge of the world?—and they would agree to lay the matter, reinforced by a strong personal plea, before the Viceroy of Mexico; who in turn would send it to the Cabinet and King at Madrid. Meanwhile, he was to confide in the priests at the

Mission. Not only would their sympathies be enlisted, but they did much trading under the very nose of the government. Not for personal gain —they were vowed to a life of poverty; but for their Indian converts, and there were twelve hundred at the Mission of San Francisco, they would wink at many things condemnable in the abstract. He had engaged to visit them on the morrow, and he must take presents to tempt their impersonal cupidity, and invite them to inspect the rest of his wares—which the Governor would be informed he had been forced to buy with the *Juno* from the Yankee skipper, D'Wolf, and would rid himself of did opportunity offer.

Rezánov had never received sounder advice, and had promptly accepted it. Now, as he reflected that it had been given by a girl of sixteen, he was divided between admiration of her precocity and fear lest she be too young to keep a secret. Moreover, there were other considerations.

Rezánov, although in his earlier years he had so far sacrificed his interests and played into the hands of his enemies, in avoiding the too embarrassing partiality of Catherine the Great, had nevertheless held a high place at court by right

of birth, and been a man of the world always; rarely absent from St. Petersburg during the last and least susceptible part of the imperial courtesan's life, the brief reign of Paul, and the two years between the accession of Alexander and the sailing of the *Nadeshda*. Moreover, there was hardly another court of importance in Europe with which he was not familiar, and few men had had a more complete experience of life. And the life of a courtier, a diplomat, a traveller, noble, wealthy, agreeable to women by divine right, with active enemies and a horde of flatterers, in daily contact with the meaner and more disingenuous corners of human nature, is not conducive to a broad optimism and a sweet and immutable Christianity. Rezánov inevitably was more or less cynical and blasé, and too long versed in the ways of courts and courtiers to retain more than a whimsical tolerance of the naked truth and an appreciation of its excellence as a diplomatic manœuvre. Nevertheless, he was by nature too impetuous ever to become under any provocation a dishonest man, and too normally a gentleman to deviate from a certain personal code of honor. He might come to California with fair words and a very definite intention of annex-

ing it to Russia at the first opportunity, but he was incapable of abusing the hospitality of the Argüellos by making love to their sixteen-year-old daughter. Had she been of the years he had assumed he would have had less scruple in embarking upon a flirtation, both for the pastime and the use he might make of her. A Spanish beauty of twenty, still unmarried, would be more than his match. But a child, however precocious, inevitably would fall in love with the first uncommon stranger she met; and Rezánov, less vain than most men of his kind, and with a fundamental humanity that was the chief cause in his efforts to improve the condition of his wretched promuschleniki, had no taste for the rôle of heart-breaker.

But the girl had proved her timeliness, would, if trustworthy, be of further use in inclining her father and the Governor toward such of his designs as he had any intention of revealing; and weighing carefully his conversations with her, he was disposed to believe that she would screen and abet him through vanity and love of intrigue. After the dinner, in the seclusion of the sala, he had taken pains to explore for the causes of her mental maturity. Concha had told him of Don

José Argüello's ambition that his children in their youth should have the education he had been forced to acquire in his manhood; he had taught them himself, and notwithstanding his piety and the disapproval of the priests, had permitted them to read the histories, travels, and biographies he received once a year from the City of Mexico. Rezánov had met Madame de Staël and other bas bleus, and given them no more of his society than politeness demanded, but although astonished at the amount of information this young girl had assimilated, he found nothing in her manner of wearing her intellectual crown to offend his fastidious taste. She was wholly artless in her love of books and of discussing them; and nothing in their contents had disturbed the sweetest innocence he had ever met. Of the little arts of coquetry she was mistress by inheritance and much provocation, but her unawakened inner life breathed the simplicity and purity of the elemental roses that hovered about her in his thoughts. Her very unsusceptibility made the game more dangerous; if it piqued him—and he aspired to be no more than human—he either should have to marry her, or nurse a sore spot in his conscience for the rest of his

life; and for neither alternative had he the least relish.

He dismissed the subject at last with an impatient shrug. Perhaps he was a conceited ass, as his English friends would say; perhaps the Governor would be more amenable than she had represented. No man could forecast events. It was enough to be forearmed.

But his thoughts swung to a theme as little disburdening. His needs, as he had confided to Concha, were very pressing. The dry or frozen fish, the sea-dogs, the fat of whales, upon which the employees of the company were forced to subsist in the least hospitable of climes, had ravaged them with scorbutic diseases until their numbers were so reduced by death and desertion there was danger of depopulation and the consequent bankruptcy of the Company. Since June of the preceding year until his departure from New Archangel in the previous month, he had been actively engaged in inspection of the Company's holdings from Kamchatka to Sitka: reforming abuses, establishing schools and libraries, as well as measures to protect the fur-bearing animals from reckless slaughter both by the promuschleniki and marauding foreigners; pun-

ishing and banishing the worst offenders against the Company's laws; encouraging the faithful, and sharing hardships with them that sent memories of former luxuries and pleasures scurrying off to the realms of fantasy. But his rule would be incomplete and his efforts end in failure if the miserable Russians and natives in the employ of the Company were not vitalized by proper food and cheered with the hope of its permanence.

In Santiago's story of the Russian visitor's achievements and status there was the common mingling of truth and fiction the exalted never fail to inspire. Rezánov, although he had accomplished great ends against greater odds, was too little of a courtier at heart ever to have been a prime favorite in St. Petersburg until the accession of a ruler with whom he had something in common. A dissolute woman and a crack-brained despot were the last to appreciate an original and independent mind, and the seclusion of Alexander had been so complete during the lifetime of his father that Rezánov had barely known him by sight. But the Tsarovitz, enthusiastic for reform and a passionate admirer of enterprise, knew of Rezánov, and no sooner did he mount his gory

throne than he confirmed the Chamberlain in his tremendous enterprise, and two years later made him a Privy Counsellor, invested him with the order of St. Ann and chose him for the critical embassy to the verdant realm with the blind and gateless walls.

Rezánov had conquered so far in life even less by address than by the demonstration of abilities very singular in a man of his birth and education. When he met Shelikov, the Siberian fur merchant and trader, during the latter's visit to St. Petersburg in 1788, he was a young man with little interest in life outside of its pleasures, and a patrimony that enabled him to command them to no great extent and barely to maintain the dignity of his rank. Shelikov's plan to obtain a monopoly of the fur trade in the islands and territories added by his company to Russia, possibly throughout the entire possession, thus preventing the destruction of sables, seals, otters, and foxes by small traders and foreigners, interested him at once; or possibly he was merely fascinated at first by the shrewd and dauntless representative of a class with which he had never before come in contact. The accidental acquaintance ripened into intimacy, Rezánov became a

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partner in the Shelikov-Golikov Company, and married the daughter of his new friend. After the death of his father-in-law, in 1795, his ambitions and business abilities, now fully awake, prompted him to obtain for himself and his partners rights analogous to those granted by England to the East India Company. Shelikov had won little more than half the power and privileges he had solicited of Catherine, although he had amalgamated the two leading companies, drawn in several others, and built ships and factories, the latter protected by forts. And if the regnant merchants made large fortunes, the enterprise in general suffered from the rivalries between the various companies, and above all from lack of imperial support.

Rezánov, his plans made, brought to bear all the considerable influence he was able to command, called upon all his resources of brain and address, and brought Catherine to the point of consenting to sign the charter he needed. Before it was ready for the imperial signature she died. Rezánov was forced to begin again with her ill-balanced and intractable son. Natalie Shelikov, his famous mother-in-law, the old shareholders of the company, and the many new ones that had

subscribed to Rezánov's ambitious project, gave themselves up to despair. For a time the outlook was dark. The personal enemies of Rezánov and the bitter and persistent opponents of the companies threw themselves eagerly into the scale with tales of the brutality of the merchants and the threatened extirpation of the fur-bearing animals. Paul announced his intention to abolish all the companies and close the colonies to traders big and little.

But the enemy had a very subtle antagonist in Rezánov. Apparently dismissing the subject, he applied himself to gaining a personal ascendancy over the erratic but impressionable Tsar. No one in the opposing camp could compare with him in that fine balance of charm and brain which was his peculiar gift, or in the adroit manipulation of a mind propelled mainly by vanity. He studied Paul's moods and character, discovered that after some senseless act of oppression he suffered from a corresponding remorse, and was peculiarly susceptible to any plan that would increase his power and add lustre to his name. The commercial and historic advantages of prosperous northeastern possessions were artfully instilled. At the opportune moment Rezánov

laid before him a scheme, mature in every detail, for a great company that would add to the wealth of Russia, and convince Europe of the sound commercial sense and unmortal wisdom of its sovereign. Without more ado he obtained his charter.

This momentous instrument granted to the "Russian-American Company under our Highest Protection," "full privileges, for a period of twenty years on the coast of northwestern America, beginning from latitude 55 degrees north, and including the chain of islands extending from Kamchatka northward, and southward to Japan; the exclusive right to all enterprises, whether hunting, trading, or building, and to new discoveries; with strict prohibition from profiting from any of these pursuits, not only to all parties who might engage in them on their own responsibility, but also to those who formerly had ships and establishments there, except those who have united with the new Company." All private traders who refuse to join the Company were to be allowed to sell their property and depart in peace.

Thus was formed the first Trust Company of America; and the United States never has

had so formidable a menace to her territorial greatness as in this Russian nobleman who paced that night the wretched deck of the little ship he had bought from one of her skippers. Perturbed in mind at his recent failures and immediate prospects, he was no less determined to take California from the Spaniards either by absorption or force.

On his way from New Archangel to San Francisco he had met with his second failure since leaving St. Petersburg. It was his intention to move the Sitkan colony down to the mouth of the Columbia River, not only pressed by the need of a more beneficent soil, but as a first insidious advance upon San Francisco Bay. Upon this trip it would be enough to make a survey of the ground and bury a copper plate inscribed: "Possession of the Russian Empire." The *Juno* had encountered terrific storms. After three desperate attempts to reach the mouth of the river, Rezánov had been forced to relinquish the enterprise for the moment and hasten with his diseased and almost useless crew to the nearest port. It was true that the attempt could be made again later, but Rezánov, sanguine of temperament, was correspondingly depressed by failure and disposed to regard it as an ill-omen.

An ambassador inspired by heaven could have accomplished no more with the Japanese at that mediæval stage of their development than he had done, and the most indomitable of men cannot yet control the winds of heaven; but sovereigns are rarely governed by logic, and frequently by the favorite at hand. The privilege of writing personally to the Tsar, in his case, meant more and less than appeared on the surface. It was a measure to keep the reports of the Company out of the hands of the Admiralty College, its bitterest enemy, and always jealous of the Civil Service. Nevertheless, Rezánov knew that he had no immediate reason to apprehend the loss of Alexander's friendship and esteem; and if he placed the Company, in which all the imperial family had bought shares, on a sounder basis than ever before, and doubled its earnings by insuring the health of its employees, he would meet, when in St. Petersburg again, with practically no opposition to his highest ambitions. These ambitions he deliberately kept in a fluid state for the present. Whether he should aspire to great authority in the government, or choose to rule with the absolute powers of the Tsar himself these already vast possessions on the Pacific—and

to whose expansion there need be no limit within the boundaries of his own will—would be decided by events. All his inherited and cultivated instincts yearned for the brilliant and complex civilizations of Europe, but the new world had taken a firm hold upon his humaner and appealed more insidiously to his despotic. Moreover, Europe, torn up by that human earthquake, Napoleon Bonaparte, would lose the greater half of its sweetness and savor. All that, however, could be determined upon his return to St. Petersburg in the autumn.

But meanwhile he must succeed with these Californians, or they might prove, toy soldiers as they were, more perilous to his fortunes than enemies at court. He could not afford another failure; and news of this attempt and an exposition of all that depended upon it was already on the road to the capital of Russia.

He had known, of course, of the law that forbade the Spanish colonies to trade with foreign ships, but he had relied partly upon the use he could make of the orders given by the Spanish King at the request of the Tsar regarding the expedition under Krusenstern, partly upon his own wit and address. But although the royal

order had insured him immediate hospitality and saved him many wearisome formalities, he had already discovered that the Spanish on the far rim of their empire had lost nothing of their connate suspicion. Rather, their isolation made them the more wary. Although they little appreciated the richness and variousness of California's soil, and not at all this wonderful bay that could accommodate the combined navies of the world, pocketing several, the pious zeal of the clergy in behalf of the Indians, and the general policy of Spain to hold all of the western hemisphere that disintegrating forces would permit, made her as tenacious of this vast territory she had so sparsely populated as had she been aware that its foundations were of gold, conceived that its climate and soil were a more enduring source of wealth than ever she would command again. If Rezánov was without a prophetic sense of the former—although he had taken note of Argüello's casual reference to a vein of silver and lead in the Monterey hills—no man ever more thoroughly appreciated the visible resources of California than he. Baránhov, chief-manager of the Company, had talked with American and British skippers for twenty years, and every item

he had accumulated Rezánov had extracted. Today he had drawn further information from Concha and her brothers; and their artless descriptions as well as this incomparable bay had filled him with enthusiasm. What a gift to Russia! What an achievement to his immortal credit! The fog had rolled in from the Pacific in great white waves and stealthily enfolded him, obliterated the sea and the land. But he did not see it. Apprehension left him. Once more he fell to dreaming. In the course of a few years the Company would attract a large population to the mouth of the Columbia River, be strong enough to make use of any favorable turn in European politics and sweep down upon California. The geographical position of Mexico, the arid and desolate, herbless and waterless wastes intervening, would prohibit her sending any considerable assistance overland; and, all powerful at court by that time, he would take care that the Russian navy inspired Spain with a distaste for remote Pacific waters. He had long since recovered from the disappointment induced by the orders compelling him to remain in the colonies. The great Company he had heretofore regarded merely as a source of income and a means of ad-

vancing his ambitions, he now loved as his child. Even during the marches over frozen swamps and mountains, during the terrible winter in Sitka when he had become familiar with illness and even with hunger, his ardor had grown, as well as his determination to force Russia into the front rank of commercial Europe. The United States he barely considered. He respected the new country for the independent spirit and military genius that had routed so powerful a nation as Great Britain, but he thought of her only as a new and tentative civilization on the far shores of the Atlantic. After some experience of travel in Siberia, and knowing the immensity and primeval conditions of northwestern America, he did not think it probable that the little cluster of states, barely able to walk alone, would indulge in dreams of expansion for many years to come. He had heard of the projected expedition of Lewis and Clarke to the mouth of the Columbia, but—perhaps he was too Russian—he did not take any adventure seriously that had not a mighty nation at its back. And as it was almost the half of a century from that night before the American flag flew over the Custom House of Monterey, there is reason to believe that Russian

aggression under the leadership of so energetic and resourceful a spirit as Nicolaï Petrovich de Rezánov was in a fair way to make history first in the New Albion of Drake and the California of the incompetent Spaniard.

V

The Russians were to call at the house of the Comandante on their way to the Mission, and Concha herself made the chocolate with which they were to be detained for an hour. It was another sparkling morning, one of the few that came between winter and summer, summer and winter, and made even this bleak peninsula a land of enchantment before the trade winds took the sand hills up by their foundations and drove them down to Yerba Buena, submerging the battery and every green thing by the way; or the great fogs rolled down from the tule lands of the north and in from the sea, making the shivering San Franciscan forget that not ten miles away the sun was as prodigal as youth. For a few weeks San Francisco had her springtime, when the days were warm and the air of a wonderful lightness and brightness, the atmosphere so clear that the flowers might be seen on the islands, when man walked with wings on his feet and a song in his heart; when the past was done with, the future mattered not, the present with its ever changing hues on bay and hill, its cool elec-

trical breezes stirring imagination and pulse, was all in all.

And it was in San Francisco's springtime that Concha Argüello made chocolate for the Russian to whom she was to give a niche in the history of her land; and sang at her task. She whirled the molinillo in each cup as it was filled, whipping the fragrant liquid to froth, pausing only to scold when her servant stained one of the dainty saucers or cups. Poor Rosa did not sing, although the spring attuned her broken spirit to a gentler melancholy than when the winds howled and the fog was cold in her marrow. She had been sentenced by the last Governor, the wise Borica, to eight years of domestic servitude in the house of Don José Argüello for abetting her lover in the murder of his wife. Concha, thoughtless in many things, did what she could to exorcise the terror and despair that stared from the eyes of the Indian, and puzzled her deeply. Rosa adored her young mistress and exulted even when Concha's voice rose in wrath; for was not she noticed by the loveliest señorita in all the Californias, while others, envious, and spiteful to a poor girl no worse than themselves, were ignored?

Concha's cheeks were as pink as the Castilian roses that grew even before the kitchen door and were quivering at the moment under the impassioned carolling of a choir of larks. Her black eyes were full of dancing lights, like the imprisoned sun-flecks under the rose bush, and never had indolent Spanish hands moved so quickly.

"Mira! Mira!" she cried to the luckless Rosa. "That is the third time thou hast spilt the chocolate. Thy hands are of wood when they should be of air. A soft bit of linen to clean them, not that coarse rag. Dios de mi alma! I shall send for Malia."

"For the love of Mary, señorita, have pity!" wailed Rosa. "There—see—thanks to the Virgin I have poured three cups without spilling a drop. And this rag is of soft linen. Look, Doña Concha, is it not true?"

"Bueno; take care thou leavest not one drop on a saucer and I will forgive thee—do not kiss my hand now, foolish one! How can I whirl the molinillo? Be always good and I will burn a candle for thee every time I go to the Mission. The Russians go to the Mission this morning. Hast thou seen the Russians, Rosa?"

"I have seen them, señorita. Did I not serve at table yesterday?"

"True; I had forgotten. What didst thou think of them?"

"What matters it to such great folk what a poor Indian girl thinks of them? They are very fair, which may be the fashion in their country; but I am not accustomed to it; and I like not beards."

"His excellency wore no beard—he who sat on my mother's right and opposite to me."

"He is very grand, señorita; more grand than the Governor, who after all has red hair and is old. He is even grander than Don José, whom may the saints preserve; or than the padres at the Mission. Perhaps he is a king, like our King and natural lord in Spain. (El rey nuestro y señor natural.) Is he a king, señorita?"

"No, but he should be. Rosa, thou mayst have my red cloak that came from Mexico—last year. I have a new one and that is too small. I had intended to give it to Ana Paula, but thou art a good girl and should have a gay mantle for Sunday, like the other girls. I have also a red ribbon for thy hair——"

Rosa spilt half the contents of the chocolate pot on the floor and Concha gave her a sound box on the ear. However, she did not dismiss her, a

sentence for which the trembling girl prepared herself.

"Make more—quickly!" cried the lady of caprice. "They come. I hear them. But this is enough for the first. Make the rest and beat with the molinillo as I have done, and Malia will bring all to the corridor."

She ran to her room and her mirror. Both were small, the former little more luxurious than the cell of a nun. But the roses hung over the window, the birds had built in the eaves, and over the wall the sun shone in. In one corner was an altar and a crucifix. If the walls were rough and white, they were as spotless as the hands that shook out and then twisted high the fine dusky masses of hair. When a fold had been drawn down over either ear, in the modest fashion of the California maid and wife, and the tall shell comb had fastened the rest, Concha instead of finishing the head-dress with her long Spanish pins, divested the stems of two half-blown roses of their thorns and thrust them obliquely through the knot. Her dress was of simple white linen made with a very full skirt and little round jacket, but embroidered by her own deft fingers with the color she loved best. She patted her frock, rolled down

her sleeves, and went out to the "corridor" to stand demurely behind her mother as the Russians, escorted by Father Ramon Abella, rode into the square.

Rezánov had intended merely to pay a call of ceremony upon the hospitable Argüellos, but after he had dismounted and kissed the hands of the smiling señora and her beautiful daughter he was nothing loath to linger over a cup of chocolate.

It was served out there in the shade of the vines. Rezánov and Concha sat on the railing, and the man stared over his cup at the girl with the roses touching her cheek and ruffling her hair.

"Do you like chocolate, señor?" asked Concha, who was not in the intellectual mood of yesterday. "I made it myself—I and my poor Rosa."

"It is the most delectable foam I have ever tasted. I am interested to know that it has the solid foundation of a name. What is the matter with your Rosa?"

"She is an unfortunate. Her lover killed his wife, and it is said that she is not innocent herself. The lover serves in chains for eight years, and she is with us that we may make her repent

and keep her from further sin. She is very unhappy and will marry the man when his punishment is over. I am very sorry for her."

"Fancy you living close to a woman like that! I find it detestable."

"Why?—if I can do her good—and make her happy, sometimes?"

"Does she ever talk about her life—before she came here?"

"Oh, no; she is far too sad. Once only, when I told her I would pray for her in the Mission, she asked me to burn a candle that her lover might serve his sentence more quickly and come out and marry her. Will you light one for her to-day, señor?"

"With the greatest pleasure; if you really want your maid to marry a man who no doubt will murder her for the sake of some other woman."

"Oh, surely not! He loves her. I know that many men love more than once, but when they are punished like that, they must remember."

"Is it true that you are only sixteen? Is that an impertinent question? I cannot help it. Those years are so few, and so much wisdom has gone into that little head."

"Sixteen is quite old." Concha drew herself

up with an air of offended dignity. "Elena Castro, who lives on the other side, is but eighteen and she has three little ones. The Virgin brought them in the night and left them in the big rosebush you see before the door—one at a time, of course. Only the old nurse knew; the Virgin whispered it while she was saying a prayer for Elena; and early in the morning she came and found the dear little baby and put it in Elena's arms. I am the godmother of the first—Conchitita. In Santa Barbara, where we lived for some years, Anita Amanda Carillo, the friend of Ana Paula, is married, although she is but twelve and sits on the floor all day and plays with her dolls. She prays every night to the Virgin to bring her a real baby, but she is not old enough to take care of it and must wait. Twelve is too young to marry." Concha shook her head. Her eyes were wise, and Rezánov noted anew that her mouth alone was as young as her years. "My father would not permit such a thing. I am glad he is not anxious we should marry soon. I should love to have the babies, though; they are so sweet to play with and make little dresses for. But my mother says the Virgin does not bring the little ones to good girls—poor Rosa had one but it died —until their parents find them a husband first. I

have never wanted a husband——" Concha darted a swift glance over her shoulder, but Santiago was in the clutches of the learned doctor and wishing that he knew no Latin; "so I go every day and play with Elena's babies, which is well enough."

Rezánov listened to this innocent revelation with the utmost gravity, but for the first time in many years he was conscious of a novel fascination in a sex to which he had paid no niggard's tribute. In his world the married woman reigned; it was doubtful if he had ever had ten minutes conversation with a young girl before, never with one whose face and form were as arresting as her crystal purity. He was fascinated, but more than ever on his guard. As he rode over the sand hills to the Mission she clung fast to his thoughts and he speculated upon the woman hidden away in the depths of that lovely shell like the deep color within the tight Castilian buds that opened so slowly. He recalled the personalities of the young officers that surrounded her. They were charming fellows, gay, kindly, honest; but he felt sure that not one of them was fit to hold the cup of life to the exquisite young lips of Concha Argüello. The very thought disposed him to twist their necks.

VI

The Mission San Francisco de Assisi stood at the head of a great valley about a league from the Presidio and facing the eastern hills. Behind it, yet not too close, for the priests were ever on their guard against Indians more lustful of loot than salvation, was a long irregular chain of hills, breaking into twin peaks on its highest ridge, with a lone mountain outstanding. It was an imposing but forbidding mass, as steep and bare as the walls of a fortress; but in the distance, north and south, as the range curved in a tapering arc that gave the valley the appearance of a colossal stadium, the outlines were soft in a haze of pale color. The sheltered valley between the western heights and the sand hills far down by the bay where it turned to the south, was green with wheat fields; and a small herd of cattle grazed on the lower slopes. The beauty of this superbly proportioned valley was further enhanced by groves of oaks and bay trees, and by a lagoon, communicating with an arm of the bay, which the priests had named for their Lady of

Sorrows—Nuestro Señora de los Dolores. The little sheet of water was almost round, very green and set in a thicket of willows that were green, too, in the springtime, and golden in summer. Near its banks, or closer to the protecting Mission—on whose land grant they were built—were the comfortable adobe homes of the few Spanish pioneers that preferred the bracing north to the monotonous warmth of the south. Some of these houses were long and rambling, others built about a court; all were surrounded by a high wall, after a brief interval of garden where the Castilian roses grew even more luxuriantly than at the Presidio. The walls, like the houses, were white, and on those of Don Juan Moraga, a cousin of Doña Ignacia Argüello, the roses had been trained to form a border along the top in a fashion that reminded Rezánov of the pink-edged walls of Fiesole.

The white red-tiled church and the long line of rooms adjoining were built of adobe with no effort at grandeur, but with a certain noble simplicity of outline that harmonized not only with the lofty reserve of the hills but with the innocent hope of creating a soul in the lowest of human bipeds. The Indians of San Francisco were as

The white red-tiled church *** built of adobe, with no effort at grandeur but with a certain novel simplicity of outline. Page 72.

immedicable as they were hideous; but the fathers belabored them with sticks and heaven with prayer, and had so far succeeded that if as yet they had sown piety no higher than the knees they had trained some twelve hundred pairs of hands to useful service.

On the right was a graveyard, with little in it as yet but rose trees; behind the church and the many spacious rooms built for the consolation of virtue in the wilderness was a large building surrounding a court. Girls and young widows occupied the cells on the north side and the work rooms on the east, while the youths, under the sharp eye of a lay brother, were opposite. All lived a life of unwilling industry: cleaning and combing wool, spinning, weaving, manufacturing chocolate, grinding corn between stones, making shoes, fashioning the simple garments worn by priest and Indian. Between the main group of buildings and the natural rampart of the "San Bruno Mountains" was the Rancheria, where the families lived in eight long rows of isolated huts.

In spite of vigilance an Indian escaped now and again to the mountains, where he could lie naked in the sun and curse the fetich of civilization. As the Russians approached, a friar, with

deer-skin armor over his cassock, was tugging at a recalcitrant mule, while a body-guard of four Indians stood ready to attend him down the coast in search of an enviable brother. The mule, as if in sympathy with the fugitive, had planted his four feet in the earth and lifted his voice in derision, while the young friar, a recruit at the Mission, and far from enamored of his task, strained at the rope, and an Indian pelted the hindquarters with stones. Suddenly, the mule flung out his heels, the enemy in the rear sprawled, the rope flew loose, the beast with a loud bray fled toward the willows of Dolores. But the young priest was both agile and angry. With a flying leap he reached the heaving back. The mule acknowledged himself conquered. The body-guard trotted on their own feet, and the party disappeared round a bend of the hills.

Rezánov laughed heartily and even the glum visage of Father Abella relaxed.

"It is a common sight, Excellency," he said. "We are thankful to have a younger friar for such fatiguing work. Many a time have I belabored stubborn mules and bestrode bucking mustangs while searching for one of these ungrateful but no doubt chosen creatures. It is the

will of God, and we make no complaint; but we are very willing, Father Landaeta and I, that youth should cool its ardor in so certain a fashion while we attend to the more reasonable duties at home."

They dismounted at the door of the church. The horses were led off by waiting Indians. The soldier on guard saluted and stepped aside, and the party entered. Two priests in handsome vestments stood before the altar, but the long dim nave was empty. The Russians had been told that a mass would be said in their honor, and they marched down the church and bent their knees with as much ceremony as had they been of the faith of their hosts. When the short mass was over, Rezánov bethought himself of Concha's request, and whispering its purport to Father Abella was led to a double iron hoop stuck with tallow dips in various stages of petition. Rezánov lit a candle and fastened it in an empty socket. Then with a whimsical twist of his mouth he lit and adjusted another.

"No doubt she has some fervent wish, like all children," he thought apologetically. "And whether this will help her to realize it or not, at least it will be interesting to watch her eyes—

and mouth—when I tell her. Will she melt, or flash, or receive my offering at her shrine as a matter of course? I'll surprise her to-night in the middle of a dance."

He deposited a gold piece among the candles on the table and followed Father Abella through a side door. A corridor ran behind the long line of rooms designed not only for priests but for the travellers always sure of a welcome at these hospitable Missions. Father Abella shuffled ahead, halted on the threshold of a large room, ceremoniously invited his guests to enter. Two other priests stood before a table set with wine and delicate confections, their hands concealed in their wide brown sleeves, but their unmatched physiognomies—the one lean and jovial, the other plump and resigned—alight with the same smile of welcome. Father Abella mentioned them as his coadjutor Father Martin Landaeta, and their guest Father José Uria of San José; and then the three, with the scant rites of genuine hospitality, applied themselves to the tickling of palates long unused to ambrosial living. Responding ingenuously to the glow of their home-made wines, they begged Rezánov to accept the Mission, burn it, plunder it, above all, to plan his own day.

"I hope that I am to see every detail of your great work," replied the diplomatic guest of honor. "But at your own leisure. Meanwhile, I beg that you will order one of your Indians to bring in the little presents I venture to offer as a token of my respect. You may have heard that the presents of his Imperial Majesty were refused by the Mikado of Japan. I reserved many of them for possible use in our own possessions, particularly a piece of cloth of gold. This I had intended for our church at New Archangel, but finding the priests there more in need of punishment than reward, I concluded to bring it here and offer it as a manifest of my admiration for what the great Franciscan Order of the Most Holy Church of Rome has accomplished in the Californias. Have I been too presumptuous?"

The priests all wore the eager expressions of children.

"Could we not see them first?" asked Father Landaeta of his superior; and Father Abella sent a servant with an order to unload the horse and bring in the presents.

Not a vestige of reserve lingered. Priests and guests sat about the table eating and drinking and chatting as were they old friends reunited,

and Rezánov extracted much of the information he desired. The white population—"gente de razon"—of Alta California, the peculiar province of the Franciscans—the Jesuits having been the first to invade Baja California, and with little success—numbered about two thousand, the Christianized Indians twenty thousand. There were nineteen Missions and four Presidial districts—San Diego, close to the border of Baja California, Santa Barbara, Monterey, and San Francisco. Each Mission had an immense grant of land, or rancho—generally fifteen miles square—for the raising of live stock, agricultural necessities, and the grape. At the Presidio of San Francisco there were some seventy men, including invalids; and the number varied little at the other military centres, Rezánov inferred, although there was a natural effort to impress the foreigner with the casual inferiority of the armed force within his ken. Cattle and horses increased so rapidly that every few years there was a wholesale slaughter, although the agricultural yield was enormous. What the Missions were unable to manufacture was sent them from Mexico, and disposed of the small salaries of the priests; the "Pious Fund of California" in the City of Mexico being sys-

tematically embezzled. The first Presidio and Mission were founded at San Diego in July of 1769; the last at San Francisco in September and October of 1776.

Rezánov's polite interest in the virgin country was cut short by the entrance of two Indians carrying heavy bundles, which they opened upon the floor without further delay.

The cloth of gold was magnificent, and the padres handled it as rapturously as had their souls and fingers been of the sex symbolized while exalted by the essence of maternity in whose service it would be anointed. Rezánov looked on with an amused sigh, yet conscious of being more comprehending and sympathetic than had he journeyed straight from Europe to California. It was not the first time he had felt a passing gratitude for his uncomfortable but illuminating sojourn so close to the springs of nature.

The priests were as well pleased with the pieces of fine English cloth; and as their own homespun robes rasped like hair shirts, they silently but uniformly congratulated themselves that the color was brown.

Father Abella turned to Rezánov, his saturnine features relaxed.

"We are deeply grateful to your excellency, and our prayers shall follow you always. Never have we received presents so timely and so magnificent. And be sure we shall not forget the brave officers that have brought you safely to our distant shores, nor the distinguished scholar who guards your excellency's health." He turned to Langsdorff and repeated himself in Latin. The naturalist, whose sharp nose was always lifted as if in protest against oversight and ready to pounce upon and penetrate the least of mysteries, bowed with his hand on his heart, and translated for the benefit of the officers.

"Humph!" said Davidov in Russian. "Much the Chamberlain will care for the prayers of the Catholic Church if he has to go home with his cargo. But he has a fine opportunity here for the display of his diplomatic talents. I fancy they will avail him more than they did at Nagasaki—where I am told he swore more than once when he should have kowtowed and grinned."

"I shouldn't like to see him grin," replied Khostov, as they finally started for the out-buildings. "If he could go as far as that he would be the most terrible man living. Were it not for the fire in him that melts the iron just so often

he would be crafty and cruel instead of subtle and firm. He is a fortunate man! There were many fairies at his cradle! I have always envied him, and now he is going to win that beautiful Doña Concha. She will look at none of us."

"We will doubtless meet others as beautiful at the ball to-night," said Davidov philosophically. "You are not in love with a girl who has barely spoken to you, I suppose."

"She had almost given me a rose this morning, when Rezánov, who was flattering the good Doña Ignacia with a moment of his attention, turned too soon. I might have been air. She looked straight through me. Such eyes! Such teeth! Such a form! She is the most enchanting girl I have ever seen. And he will monopolize her without troubling to notice whether we even admire her or not. Pray heaven he does not break her heart."

"He is honorable. One must admit that, if he does fancy his own will was a personal gift from the Almighty. Perhaps she will break his. I never saw a more accomplished flirt."

"I know women," replied the shrewder Khostov. "When men like Rezánov make an effort to please——" He shrugged his shoulders.

"Some men are the offspring of Mars and Venus and most of us are not. We can at least be philosophers. Let us hope the dinner will be excellent."

VII

It proved to be the most delicate and savory repast that had excited their appetites this side of Europe. The friars had their consolations, and even Doña Ignacia Argüello was less gastronomic than Father Landaeta. Rezánov, whose epicurism had survived a year of dried fish and the coarse luxuries of his managers, suddenly saw all life in the light of the humorist, and told so many amusing versions of his adventures in the wilderness, and even of his misadventure with Japan, that the priests choked over their wine, and Langsdorff, who had not a grain of humor, swelled with pride in his chance relationship to a man who seemed able to manipulate every string in the human network.

"He will succeed," he thought. "He will succeed. I almost hoped he would not, he is so indifferent—I might almost say so hostile to my own scientific adventures. But when he is in this mood, when those cold eyes brim with laughter and ordinary humanity, I am nothing better than his slave."

Rezánov, in reply to an entreaty from Father Uria to tell them more of his mission and of the strange picture-book country they had never hoped to hear of at first hand, assumed a tone of great frankness and intimacy. "We were, with astounding cleverness, treated from the first like an audience in a new theatre. After we had solemnly been towed by a string of boats to anchor, under the Papen mountains, all Nagasaki appeared to turn out, men, women, and children. Thousands of little boats, decorated with flags by day and colored lanterns by night, and filled with people in gala attire, swarmed about us, gazed at us through telescopes, were so thick on the bay one could have traversed it on foot. The imperial sailors were distinguished by their uniforms of a large blue and white check, suggesting the pinafores of a brobdignagian baby. The barges of the imperial princes were covered with blue and white awnings and towed to the sound of kettledrums and the loud measured cries of the boatmen. At night the thousands of illuminated lanterns, of every color and shade, the waving of fans, the incessant chattering, and the more harmonious noise that rose unceasingly above, made up a scene as brilliant as it was

juvenile and absurd. In the daytime it was more interesting, with the background of hills cultivated to their crests in the form of terraces varied with rice fields, hamlets, groves, and paper villas encircled with little gardens as glowing and various of color as the night lanterns. When, at last, I was graciously permitted to have a residence on a point of land called Megasaki, I was conveyed thither in the pleasure barge of the Prince of Fisi. There was place for sixty oarsmen, but as one of the few tokens of respect I was enabled to record for the comfort of the mighty sovereign whose representative I was, the barge was towed by a long line of boats, decorated with flags, the voices of the rowers rising and falling in measured cadence as they announced to all Japan the honor about to be conferred upon her. I sat on a chair of state in the central compartment of the barge, and quite alone; my suite standing on a raised deck beyond. Before me on a table, marvellously inlaid, were my credentials. I was surrounded by curtains of sky-blue silk and panels of polished lacquer inwrought with the imperial arms in gold. The awning of blue and white silk was lined with a delicate and beautiful tapestry, and the reverse side of the

silken partitions were of canvas painted by the masters of the country. The polished floor was covered by a magnificent carpet woven with alarming dragons whose jaws pointed directly at my chair of state. And such an escort and such a reception, both of ceremony and of curiosity, no Russian had ever boasted before. Flags waved, kettledrums beat, fans were flung into my very lap to autograph. The bay, the hills, were a blaze of color and a confusion of sound. The barracks were hung with tapestries and gay silks. I, with my arms folded and in full uniform, my features composed to the impassivity of one of their own wooden gods, was the central figure of this magnificent farce; and it may be placed to the everlasting credit of the discipline of courts that not one of my staff smiled. They stood with their arms folded and their eyes on the inlaid devices at their feet.

"When this first act was over and I was locked in for the night and felt myself able to kick my way through the flimsy walls, yet as completely a prisoner as if they had been of stone, I will confess that I fell into a most undiplomatical rage; and when I found myself played with from month to month by a people I scorned as a grotesque

mixture of barbarian and manikin, I was alternately infuriated, and consumed with laughter at the vanity of men and nations."

His voice dropped from its light ironical note, and became harsh and abrupt with reminiscent disgust. "And the end of it all was failure. The superb presents of the Tsar were rejected. These presents: coats of black fox and ermine, vases of fossil ivory and of marble, muskets, pistols, sabres, magnificent lustres, table services of crystal and porcelain, tapestries and carpets, immense mirrors, a clock in the form of an elephant and set with precious stones, a portrait of the Tsar by Madame le Brun, damasks, furs, velvets, printed cotton, cloths, brocades of gold and silver, microscopes, gold and silver watches, a complete electrical machine—presents, in all, of the value of three hundred thousand roubles, were returned with scant ceremony to the *Nadeshda* and I was politely told to leave.

"But the mortification was the least of my worries. The object of the embassy was to establish not only good will and friendship between Russia and Japan, for which we cared little, but commercial intercourse between this fertile country and our northeastern and barren posses-

sions. It would have been greatly to the advantage of the Japanese, and God knows it would have meant much to us."

Then Rezánov, having tickled the imaginations and delighted the curiosity of the priests, began to play upon their heartstrings. His own voice vibrated as he related the sufferings of the servants of the Company, and while avoiding the nomenclature and details of their bodily afflictions, gave so thrilling a hint of their terrible condition that his audience gasped with sympathy while experiencing no qualms in their own more fortunate stomachs.

He led their disarmed understandings as far down the vale of tears as he deemed wise, then permitted himself a magnificent burst of spontaneity.

"I must tell you the object of my mission to California, my kind friends!" he cried, "although I beg you will not betray me to the other powers until I think it wise to speak myself. But I must have your sympathy and advice. It has long been my desire to establish relations between Russia and Spain that should be of mutual benefit to the colonies of both in this part of the western hemisphere. I have told you of

the horrible condition and needs of my men. They must have a share in the superfluities of this most prodigal land. But I make no appeal to your mercy. Trade is not founded on charity. You well know we have much you are in daily need of. There should be a bi-yearly interchange." He paused and looked from one staring face to the other. He had been wise in his appeal. They were deeply gratified at being taken into his confidence and virtually asked to outwit the military authorities they detested.

Rezánov continued.

"I have brought the *Juno* heavy laden, my fathers, and for the deliberate purpose of barter. She is full of Russian and Boston goods. I shall do my utmost to persuade your Governor to give me of his corn and other farinaceous foods in exchange. It may be against your laws, and I am well aware that for the treaty I must wait, but I beg you in the name of humanity to point out to his excellency a way in which he can at the same time relieve our necessities and placate his conscience."

"We will! We will!" cried Father Abella. "Would that you had come in the disguise of a

common sea-captain, for we have hoodwinked the comandantes more than once. But aside from the suspicion and distrust in which Spain holds Russia, with so distinguished a visitor as your excellency, it would be impossible to traffic undetected. But there must be a way out. There shall be! And will your excellency kindly let us see the cargo? I am sure there is much we sadly need: cloth, linen, cotton, boots, shoes, casks, bottles, glasses, plates, shears, axes, implements of husbandry, saws, sheep-shears, iron wares—have you any of these things, Excellency? ''

'' All and more. Will you come to-morrow? ''

'' We will! and one way or another they shall be ours and you shall have breadstuffs for your pitiable subjects. We have as much need of Europe as you can have of California, for Mexico is dilatory and often disregards our orders altogether. One way or another—we have your promise, Excellency? ''

'' I shall not leave California without accomplishing what I came for,'' said Rezánov.

VIII

Concha boxed Rosa's ears twice while being dressed for the ball that evening. It was true that excitement had reigned throughout the Presidio all day, for never had a ball been so hastily planned. Don Luis had demurred when Concha proposed it at breakfast; officially to entertain strangers not yet officially received exceeded his authority. Concha, waxing stubborn with opposition, vowed that she would give the ball herself if he did not. Business, immediately afterward, took the Comandante ad. in. down to the Battery at Yerba Buena. Before he left he gave orders that the large hall in the barracks, where balls usually were held, should be locked and the key given up to no one but himself. He returned in the afternoon to find that Concha had outwitted him. The sala of the Comandante's house was very large. The furniture had been removed and the walls hung with flags, those of Spain on three sides, the Russian, borrowed by Santiago from the ship, at the head of the room. Concha laughed gayly as Luis stormed about the sala rasping his spurs on the bare floor.

"Whitewashed walls for guests from St. Petersburg!" she jeered, as Luis menaced the flags. "We have little enough to offer. Besides —what more wise than to flaunt our flag in the face of the Russian bear? Their flag, of course, is a mere idle compliment. Let me tell you two things, Luis mio: this morning I invited the Russians to dance to-night, and told Padre Abella to ask all our neighbors of the Mission besides; and Rafaella Sal helped me to drape every one of those flags. When I told her you might tear them down, she vowed that if you did she would dance all night with the Bostonian."

Luis lifted his shoulders and moustache to express an attitude of contemptuous resignation, but his face darkened, and a moment later he left the room and strolled up the square to the grating of Rafaella Sal.

Concha well knew that the frank gray eyes of the Bostonian—all citizens of the United States were Bostonians in that part of the world, for only Boston skippers had the enterprise to venture so far—were for no one but herself. But his face was bony and freckled, and his figure less in height and vigor than her own. He was rich and well-born, but shy and very

modest. Concha Argüello, La Favorita of California, was for some such dashing caballero as Don Antonio Castro of Monterey or Ignacio Sal, the most adventurous rider of the north. Meanwhile he could look at her and adore her in secret, and Doña Rafaella Sal was very kind and danced as well as himself. He never dreamed that he was being used as a stalking horse to keep alive in the best match in the Californias the jealous desire for exclusive possession that had animated him in 1800 when he had applied through the Viceroy of Mexico for royal consent to his marriage with the Favorita of her year. That was six years ago and never a word had come from Madrid. Luis was faithful, but men were men, and girls grew older every day. So the wise Rafaella was alternately indifferent and alluring, the object of more admiration than a maid could always repel, yet with wells of sentiment that only one man could discover. And the American was patient, and even had he known, would not in the least have minded the use she made of him. He still could look at Concha Argüello.

William Sturgis had sailed in one of his father's ships, now six years ago, from Boston

in search of health. The ship in a dense fog had gone on the rocks in the straits between the Farallones and the Bay of San Francisco. He alone, and after long hours of struggle with the wicked currents, not even knowing in what direction land might be, was flung, senseless, on the shore below the Fort. For the next month he was an invalid in the house of the Comandante. Fortunately, his papers and money were sewn in an oilskin belt and his father's name was well known in California. Moreover, there never was a more likable youth. His illness interested all the matrons and maids of the Presidio in his fate; when he recovered, his good dancing and unselfishness gave him permanent place in the regard of the women, while his entire absence of beauty, and his ability to hold his own in the mess room, established his position with the men.

In due course word of his plight reached Boston, and a ship was immediately despatched, not only to bring the castaway home, but with the fine wardrobe necessary to a young gentleman of his station. But the same ship brought word of his father's death—his mother had gone long since—and as there were brothers enamored of the business he hated, he decided to remain in

the country that had won his heart and given him health. For some time there was demur on the part of the authorities; Spain welcomed no foreigners in her colonies. But Sturgis swore a mighty oath that he would never despatch a letter uninspected by the Comandante, that he would make no excursions into the heart of the country, that he would neither engage in traffic nor interfere in politics. Then having already won the affections of the Governor, he was permitted to remain, even to rent an acre of land from the Church in the sheltered Mission valley, and build himself a house. Here he raised fruit and vegetables for his own hospitable table, chickens and game cocks. Books and other luxuries came by every ship from Boston; until for a long interval ships came no more. One of these days, when the power of the priests had abated, and the jealousy which would keep all Californians landless but themselves was counterbalanced by a great increase in population, he meant to have a ranch down in the south where the sun shone all the year round and he could ride half the day with his vaqueros after the finest cattle in the country. He never should marry because he could not marry Concha Argüello, but he could

think of her, see her sometimes; and in a land where a man was neither frozen in winter nor grilled in summer, where life could be led in the open, and the tendency was to idle and dream, domestic happiness called in a feebler note than in less equable climes. In his heart he was desperately jealous of Concha's favored cavaliers, but it was a jealousy without hatred, and his kind earnest often humorous eyes were always assuring his lady of an imperishable desire to serve her without reward. Of course Concha treated him with as little consideration as so humble a swain deserved; but in her heart she liked him better than either Castro or Sal, for he talked to her of something besides rodeos and balls, racing and cock-fights; he had taught her English and lent her many books. Moreover, he neither sighed nor languished, nor ever had sung at her grating. But she regarded him merely as an intelligence, a well of refreshment in her stagnant life, never as a man.

"Rosa," she said as she caught her hair into a high golden comb that had been worn in Spain by many a beauty of the house of Moraga, and spiked the knot with two long pins globed at the end with gold, while the maid fastened her slip-

pers and smoothed the pink silk stockings over the arched thin instep above; "what is a lover like? Is it like meeting one of the saints of heaven?"

"No, señorita."

"Like what, then?"

"Like—like nothing but himself, señorita. You would not have him otherwise."

"Oh, stupid one! Hast thou no imagination? Fancy any man being well enough as he is! For instance, there is Don Antonio, who is so handsome and fiery, and Don Ignacio, who can sing and dance and ride as no one else in all the Californias, and Don Weeliam Sturgis, who is very clever and true. If I could roll them into one—a tamale of corn and chicken and peppers—there would be a man almost to my liking. But even then—not quite. And one man—what nonsense! I have too much color to-night, Rosa."

"No, señorita, you have never been so beautiful. When the lover comes and you love him, señorita, you will think him greater than our natural king and lord, and all other men poor Indians."

"But how shall I know?"

"Your heart will tell you, señorita."

"My heart? My father and my mother will choose for me a husband whom I shall love as all other women love their husbands—just enough and no more. Then—I suppose—I shall never know?"

"Would you marry at your parents' bidding, like a child, señorita? I do not think you would."

Concha looked at the girl in astonishment, but with a greater astonishment she suddenly realized that she would not. Even her little fingers stiffened in a rush of personality, of passionate resentment against the shackles bound by the ages about the feminine ego. Her individuality, long budding, burst into flower; her eyes gazed far beyond her radiant image in the mirror with a look of terrified but dauntless insight; then moved slowly to the girl that sat weeping on the floor.

"I know not what thy sin was," she said musingly. "But I have heard it said thou didst obey no law but thine own will—and his. Why should the punishment have been so terrible? Thou hast sworn to me thou didst not help to murder the woman."

"I cannot tell you, señorita. You will never know anything of sin; but of love—yes, I think you will know that, and before very long."

"Before long?" Concha's lips parted and the nervous color she had deprecated left her cheeks. "What meanest thou, Rosa?" Her voice rose hoarsely.

And the Indian, with the insight of her own tragedy, replied: "The Russian has come for you, señorita. You will go with him, far away to the north and the snow. These others never could win your heart; but this man who looks like a king, and as if many women had loved him, and he had cared little— Oh, señorita, Carlos was only a poor Indian, but the men that women love all have something that makes them brothers—the great Russian and the poor man who goes mad for a moment and kills one woman that he may live with another for ever. The great Russian is free, but he is the same, señorita—he too could kill for love, and such are the men we women die for!"

Concha, ambitious and romantic, eager for the brilliant life the advent of this Russian nobleman seemed to herald, had assured Santiago that he would love her; but they had been the empty words of the Favorita of many conquests; of love and passion she had known, suspected, nothing. As she watched Rosa, huddled and con-

vulsed, little pointed arrows flew into her brain. Girls in those old Spanish days went to the altar with a serene faith in miracles, and it was a matter of honor among those that preceded their friends to abet the parents in a custom which assuredly did not err on the side of ugliness. Concha had a larger vocabulary than other Californians of her sex, for she had read many books, and if never a novel, she knew something of poetry. Sturgis had filled the sala with the sonorous roll of his favorite masters and it had pleased her ear; but the language of passion had been so many beautiful words, neither vibrating nor lingering in her consciousness. But the rude expression of the miserable woman at her feet, whose sobs grew more uncontrollable every moment, made it for ever impossible that she should prattle again as she had to Santiago and Rezánov in the last day and night; and although she felt as if straining her eyes in the dark, her cheeks burned once more, and she rose uneasily and walked to the window.

She returned in a moment and stood over Rosa, but her voice when she spoke had lost its hoarseness and was cold and irritated.

"Control thyself," she said. "And go and

bathe thine eyes. Wouldst look like a tomato when it is time to pass the dulces and wines? And think no more of thy lover until he can come out of prison and marry thee." She drew herself away as the woman attempted to clutch her skirts. "Go," she said. "The musicians are tuning."

IX

"The sash, Excellency?" Jón longed to see his master in full regalia once more, and after all, was not this an embassy of a sort? But Rezánov, who already regarded his reflection with some humor, shook his head.

"I'll go as far as decency permits, for no one is so impressed by external magnificence as the Spaniard. But full dress uniform and orders are enough; an ambassador's sash and they might suspect I took them for the children they are. Children are not always fools. My stock is too tight. Remember that I am to dance, and am too tall for most women's pretty little ears. And I doubt if an ear is less thirsty for being so provocatively screened."

Jón, a "prince" whose family had fallen upon evil days long since, but whose thin clever fingers were no mean inheritance, unwound and readjusted the folds of soft batiste, that most becoming neck vesture man has ever worn. He would fain have pressed the matter of the sash, but Rezánov, most indulgent of masters

to this devoted servant, was never patient of insistence. Jón also regretted the powdered wig and queue, which he privately thought more befitting a fine gentleman than his own hair, even though the latter were thick and bright. He said tentatively:

"I notice these Californians still wear the hair long; and with their gay ribbons and showy hats look much better no doubt than if they followed a fashion of which it would seem they had not heard—and perhaps do not admire. I ventured to pack two of your excellency's wigs when we were leaving St. Petersburg——"

"Good heavens, no!" cried Rezánov, rising to his feet and casting a last impatient glance at the mirror. "When a man has escaped from a furnace does he run back of his own accord? My brain would cook under a wig in this climate, and I need all my wits—for more reasons than one." And he went up on deck.

There, while awaiting his horses and escort he had another glimpse of the happy Arcadian life of the Californians. Over the sand hills through which he had floundered twice that day rode young men in gala attire, a maiden, as colorous as the sunset along the western summits, on

the saddle before them. These saddles were heavy with silver, the blanket beneath was embroidered with both silver and gold. Gay light laughter floated out on the cool evening breeze to the little ship in the harbor.

"It has been a good day," thought Rezánov, lowering his glass. "It is like her to arrange so charming a finale."

When he arrived at the Presidio the guitars were tinkling and the sala was full of eager and sombre faces. The Californians had come early, determined to witness the arrival of the Russians. Very pretty most of the girls were, and by no means a bevy of brunettes. There was hair of every shade of brown, looped over the ears, drawn high and confined by the high comb and the long pins; and Rafaella Sal, with her red hair and gray eyes, was still celebrated as a beauty, although no longer in her first youth—she was twenty-two, and should have been a matron and mother long since! But she looked very handsome and coquettish in her daring yellow frock that no other red head would have dared to wear, and she displayed three ropes of Baja California pearls, one strand being the common possession. The matrons, young and old, wore heavy satins

or brocades, either red or yellow, but the maids were in flowered silks, sometimes with coquettish little jacket, generally with long pointed bodice and full flowing skirt. Concha's frock was made in this fashion, but quite different otherwise; an aunt in the City of Mexico being mindful at whiles of the cravings of relatives in exile. It was of a soft shimmering white stuff covered with gold spangles and cut to reveal her young neck and arms. She stood at the head of the room with her mother as Rezánov entered, and he noticed for the first time how tall she was. She held herself proudly; mischievous twinkle, nor child-like trust, nor flashing coquetry possessed her eyes; which, even more star-like than usual, nevertheless looked out upon her guests with a dignified composure. Her lips, her skin, were luminous. In this well cut evening gown he saw that her figure was superb; and that she could command stateliness as well as vivacity moved her toward a pedestal in his regard that had been occupied by few and never long.

Rezánov, in his splendid uniform and blazing orders, filled the sala with his presence as he walked past the rows of bright critical eyes toward his hostesses. The young lips of the maids

parted with delight and the men frowned. For the first time William Sturgis felt the sickness of jealousy instead of its not unagreeable pain. Davidov and Khostov, both handsome and well-bred young men, were also in full naval uniform, and by no means ignored; while Langsdorff, in the severe black of the scholar, was an admirable foil.

Rezánov, wondering at the subtle change in Concha, bowed ceremoniously and murmured: "You will give me the first dance, señorita?"

"Certainly, Excellency. Are you not the guest of honor?"

She motioned to the Indian musicians, fiddles and guitars fairly leapt to position, and in a moment Rezánov enjoyed the novel delusion of encircling a girl's floating wraith.

"We can waltz, you see? Are you not surprised?"

"It is but one accomplishment the more. I feared a preference for your native dances, but ventured to hope you would teach me."

"They are easy to learn. You will watch us dance the contra-danza after this."

"With whom do you dance it?"

Her black eyelashes were very thick; he barely caught the glance she shot him.

"The Russian bear growls," she said lightly. "Did you expect to dance every dance with me?"

"I came for no other purpose."

"You would have several duels to fight to-morrow."

"I have no objection."

"You have fought others, then?" Her voice was the softer with the effort to turn its edge.

"No more than most men, I suppose. May I ask how many have been fought for you?"

"My memory is no better than yours. Why should I burden it with trifles?"

"True. It doubtless is charged with matters far more serious than the desires of mere men. Tell me, señorita, what is your dearest wish?" He had bent his head and fixed his powerful gaze on her stubborn lashes. As he hoped, she raised startled eyes in which an angry glitter dawned.

"My dearest wish? If I had one should I tell you? Why do you ask me such a question?"

"Because I lit a candle at the Mission to-day that you might realize it," he answered smiling.

To his surprise he saw a flash of terror in her eyes before she dropped them, and felt her shiver. But she answered coldly:

"You have wasted a candle, señor. I have

never had a wish that was not instantly gratified. But I thank you for the kind thought. Will you finish this waltz with my friend, and the fiancée of Luis, Rafaella Sal? She has quarrelled with Luis, I see; Don Weeliam is dancing with Carolina Ximéno, and she cares to waltz with no one else. Pardon me if I say that no one has ever waltzed as well as your excellency, and I must not be selfish."

"I will release you if you are tired, but otherwise I shall do myself the honor to waltz with your friend later."

"I must look after my other guests," she said coldly; and he was led with what grace he could summon to the fair but sulky Rafaella.

"How am I to help flirting with that girl?" he thought as he mechanically guided another light and graceful partner through the crowded room. "If she were one girl I might resist. But since eleven o'clock yesterday morning she has been three. And if she was twenty yesterday, twelve this morning, she is twenty-eight to-night, and this might be a court ball in Madrid. I shall leave the day after I bring the Governor to terms."

He sat beside Doña Ignacia during the contradanza and found the scene remarkably brilliant

and animated considering the primitive conditions. In addition to the bright flags on the wall and the vivid colors of the women, the officers of the Presidio and forts wore full dress uniform, either white coats with red velvet vest, red pantaloons and sash, or white trousers and scarlet coat and waistcoat faced with green. The young men from the Mission wore small clothes of a dove-colored cloth, fastened at the knee with silver buckles, and white silk stockings; two gentlemen from Monterey wore the evening costume of the capital, black silk small clothes, with white silk waistcoat and stockings, and much fine lawn and lace. The room was well lighted by many wicks stuck in lumps of tallow. The Indian musicians, soldiers recruited from a superior tribe in the Santa Clara valley, were clad almost entirely in scarlet, and danced sometimes as they played; and Indian girls, in short red skirts and snow-white smocks open at the throat, their long hair decorated with flowers and ribbons, already passed about wine and dulces. The windows were open. The sweet night air blew in.

The contra-danza was not unlike the square dances of England except that it was far more graceful, and the men rivalled the women in their

supple glidings and bendings, doublings and swayings. Concha danced with Ignacio Sal, Rafaella with William Sturgis; their pliant grace, as facile as grain rippling before the wind, would have put the best ballet in Europe to the blush. Concha's skirts swept Rezánov's feet, her little slippers twinkled before his admiring eyes, and he lost no sinuous turn or undulation of her beautiful figure; but she never vouchsafed him a glance.

When the dance finished his host introduced him to the prettiest of the girls and he paid them as many compliments as their heads would stand. He even took some trouble to talk to them, if only to fathom the sources of their unlikeness to Concha Argüello. He concluded that the gulf that separated her from these charming vivacious shallow young girls was not dug by education alone. Individualities were rare enough in Europe; out here, in earthly, but sparsely settled paradises, they must be rarer still; but that one had wandered into the lovely shell of Concha Argüello he no longer doubted. The fact that it had developed haphazardly, with little or no help from her sentience, and was still fluid and uncertain, but multiplied her in interest and charm.

The women to whom he was accustomed knew themselves, consequently were no riddle to a man of his experience, but here he had an odd sense of having entered into a compact in the dark with a girl who might one day symbolize some high and impassioned ideal he had cherished in the days before ideals had been cast aside with the negative virtues that bred them.

As he coolly studied the good looks of the young caballeros and the plain intellectual face and slight little figure of the Bostonian, noted the utter indifference with which they were treated by the Favorita of Presidio and Mission, he felt a sudden rush of arrogance, a youthful tingling of nerves, the same prophetic sense of imminent happiness and power that his first contact with the light electrical air and the beauty of the country had induced. After all, he was but forty-two. Life on the whole had been very kind to him. And, although he did not realize it as yet, his frame, blighted by the rigors of the past three years, was already sensible of a renewal of juice and sap. He admitted that he was more interested than he had been for many years, and that if he was not in love, he tingled with a very natural masculine desire for an adventure with a pretty girl.

But he was by no means a weak man, and his mind counted the cost even while his imagination hummed. He had almost decided to bid Doña Ignacia an abrupt good-night, pleading fatigue, which his pallor indorsed, when the door of the dining-room was thrown open to the liveliest of fiddling, and a white hand with a singular suggestion of tenacity both in appearance and clasp took possession of his arm.

"My mother has gone to Gertrudis Rudisinda, who is crying," said Concha. "It is my pleasure to lead your excellency in to supper."

They sat side by side at the head of the long table almost covered by the massive service of silver and loaded with evidences of Doña Ignacia's generosity and skill; chickens in red rice and gravy, oysters, tamales, dulces, pastries, fruits and pleasant drinks. Luis, with Rafaella Sal dimpling and sparkling at his side, and now quite resigned to the semi-official nature of the ball, rose and drank the health of the distinguished guest in long and flowery phrases. Rezánov responded in briefer but no less felicitous vein, and concluded by remarking that the only rift in the lute of his present enchanting experience was the fear that whereas he had nearly died

of starvation several times during the past three years, he was now threatened with a far more ignominious end, so delicious and irresistible were the temptations that beset the wayfarer in this most hospitable land. Both speeches were gayly applauded, the conversation became animated and general, and Concha dropped her voice to the attentive ear beside her.

"You were very successful to-day at the Mission, Excellency."

"May I ask how you know?"

"I never saw anything so serenely—arrogantly, perhaps would be a truer description—triumphant as your bearing when you walked down our humble sala to-night. You looked like Cæsar returned from Gaul; but I suppose that all great conquests are merely the sum of many small ones."

"I do not regard the friendship of so shrewd a man as Father Abella a trifling conquest. And according to yourself, dear señorita, it is essential to the success of a mission upon which many lives and my own honor depend."

"Is it really so serious?" she asked with a faint sneer.

He drew himself up stiffly and his light eyes

glowed with anger. "It is a subject I never should have thought of introducing at a festivity like this," he said suavely. "May I be permitted to compliment you, señorita, upon your marvellous grace in the contra-danza? It quite turned my head, and I am delighted to hear that you will dance alone after supper."

Her face had flushed hotly. She dropped her eyes and her voice trembled as she replied: "You humiliate me, señor, and I deserve it. I—my poor Rosa told me something of her great tragedy while dressing me, and for the moment other things seemed unimportant. What is hunger and court favor beside a broken heart and a desolate life? But that of course is the attitude of an ignorant girl." She raised her eyes. They were soft, and her voice was softer. "I beg that you will forgive me, señor. And be sure that I take an even deeper interest in your great mission than yesterday. I have thought much about it, and while I have told my mother nothing, I have expressed certain peevish hopes that a ship would not come all the way from Sitka without taking a hint more than one Boston skipper must have given, and brought us many of the things we need. She is quite excited over the prospect of a new

shawl for herself, and of sending several as presents to the south; besides many other things: cotton, shoes, kitchen utensils. Have you any of these things, Excellency?"

Rezánov stared at her face, barely tinted with color, dully wondering why it should be so different from the one, roguish, pathetically innocent, that had haunted him all day. He asked abruptly:

"Which is the friend whose little ones you envy? You have made me wish to see them and her."

"That is Elena—beside Gervasio." She indicated a young woman with soft patient brown eyes, the dignity of her race and the sweetness of young motherhood, who would have looked little older than herself had it not been for an already shapeless figure. "I can take you to-morrow to see them if you wish."

She had cast down her eyes and her face was white. Still he groped on.

"Pardon me if I say that I am surprised your parents should permit such a woman as this Rosa to attend you. Why should your happy life be disturbed by the lamentations of an abandoned creature—who can do you no good, and possibly much harm?"

Still Concha did not raise her eyes. "I do not think poor Rosa would do anyone harm. But perhaps it were as well she went elsewhere. We have had her long enough. I have taken a dislike to her. I reproach myself bitterly, but I cannot help it. I should like never to see her again."

"What has she told you?" Concha glanced up swiftly. His eyes were blazing. She felt quite certain that he rolled a Russian oath under his tongue, and she made a slight involuntary motion toward him, her lips trembling apart.

"Nothing," she murmured. "I do not know—I do not know. But I no longer wish her near me. She—life is very strange and terrible, señor. You know it well—I, so little."

Rezánov felt his breath short and his hands cold. For a moment he made no reply. Then he smiled charmingly and said in the conventional tone that was ever at his command: "Of course you know little of life in this Arcadia. One who hopes to be numbered among the best of your friends prays that you never may. Yes, señorita, life is strange—strangely commonplace and disillusionizing—but sometimes picturesque. Believe me when I say that nothing stranger has ever befallen me than to find out here on the lonely brink of

a continent nearly twenty thousand versts from Europe, a girl of sixteen with the grand manner, and the intellect without the detestable idiosyncrasies of the fashionable bas bleus I have hitherto had the misfortune to encounter."

She was tapping the table slowly with her fork, and he noted that her soft childish mouth was set. "No doubt you are quite right to put me off," she said finally, and in a voice as even as his own. "And my intellect would do me little good if it did not teach me to ignore mysteries I can never hope to fathom. There is no such thing as life in your sense in this forgotten corner of the world, nor ever will be in my time. If you come back and visit us twenty years hence you will find me fat and worn like Elena, and busy every minute like my mother—unless, indeed, I marry Don Weeliam Sturgis and become a great lady in Boston. It would not be so mean a fate."

Rezánov darted a look of angry contempt at the pale young man who was eating little and miserably watching the handsome pair at the head of the table. "You will not marry him!" he said briefly.

"I could do far worse." Concha's lashes framed an adorable glance that sent the blood to

the hair of the sensitive youth. "You have no idea how clever and good he is. And—Madre de Dios!—I am so tired of California."

"But you are a part of it—the very symbol of its future, it seems to me. I wish I had a sculptor in my suite. I should make him model you, label the statue California, and erect it on the peak of that big island out there."

"That is very poetical, but after all you are only saying that I am a pretty savage with an education that will be more common in the next generation. It is little consolation for an existence where the most exciting event in a lifetime is the arrival of a foreign ship or the inauguration of a governor." And once more she smiled at Sturgis. He raised his glass impulsively, and she hers in gay response. A moment later she gave the signal to leave the table. Rezánov followed her back to the sala chewing the cud of many reflections.

X

Concha had eaten no supper. As she entered the sala she clapped her hands, the guests ranged themselves against the wall, the musicians, livelier than ever, flew to their instruments; and, with the drifting swaying movement she could assume at will, she went slowly, absently, to the middle of the room. Then she let her head drop backward as if with the weight of her hair, and Rezánov, vaguely angry, expected one of those appeals to the senses for which Spanish women of another sort were notorious. But Concha, after tapping the floor alternately with the points and the wooden heels of her slippers, for a few moments, suddenly made an imperious gesture to Ignacio Sal. He sprang to her side, took her hand, and once more there was the same monotonous tapping of toes and heels. Then they whirled apart, bent their lithe backs until their brows almost touched the floor in a salute of mock admiration, and danced to and from each other, coquetry in the very tilt of her eyebrows, the bare semblance of masculine indulgence on his eager passionate face. Sud-

denly to the surprise of all, she snapped her fingers directly under his nose, waved her hand, turned her back and made a peremptory gesture to that other enamored young swain, Captain Antonio Castro of Monterey. Don Ignacio, surprised and discomfited, retired amidst the jeers of his friends, and Concha, with her most vivacious and gracious manner, met Castro half-way, and taking his hand danced up and down the sala, slowly and with many improvisations. Then, as they returned to the centre of the room and stepped lightly apart before joining in a gay whirl, she snapped her fingers under *his* nose, made a gesture of dismissal over her shoulder and fluttered an uplifted hand in the direction of Sturgis. Again there was delighted laughter, again a discomfited knight and a triumphant partner.

"Concha always gives us something we do not expect," said Santiago to Rezánov, whose eyes were twinkling. "The other girls dance El Son and La Jota very gracefully—yes. But Conchita dances with her head, and the musicians and the partner, when she takes one, have all they can do to follow. She will choose you next, señor."

Rezánov turned cold, and measured the dis-

tance to the door. "I hope not!" he said. "I should hate nothing so much as to make an exhibition of myself. The dances I know—that is all very well—but to improvise—for the love of heaven help me to get out."

But Santiago, who was watching his sister intently, replied: "Wait a moment, Excellency. I do not think she will choose another. I know by her feet that she intends to dance El Son—in her own way, of course—after all."

Concha circled about the room twice with Sturgis, lifted him to the seventh heaven of expectancy, dismissed him as abruptly as the others. Lifting her chin with an expression of supreme disdain for all his sex, she stood a moment, swaying, her arms hanging at her sides.

"I am glad she will not dance with Weeliam," muttered Santiago. "I love him—yes; but the Spanish dance is not for the Bostonian."

Rezánov awaited her performance with an interest that caused him some cynical amusement. But in a moment he had surrendered to her once more as a creature of inexhaustible surprise. The musicians watching her began to play more slowly. Concha, her arms still supine, her head lifted, her eyes half veiled, began to dance in a

stately and measured fashion that seemed to powder her hair and dissolve the partitions before an endless vista of rooms. Rezánov had a sudden vision of the Hall of the Ambassadors in the royal palace at Madrid, where, when a young man on his travels, he had attended a state ball. There he had seen the most dignified beauties of Europe dance at the most formal of its courts. But Concha created the illusion of having stepped down from the throne in some bygone fashion to dance alone for her subjects and adorers.

She raised her arms, barely budding at the top, with a gesture that was not only the poetry of grace but as though bestowing some royal favor; when she curved and swayed her body, again it was with the lofty sweetness of one too highly placed to descend to mere seductiveness. She glided up and down, back and forth, with a dreamy revealing motion as if assisting to shape some vague impassioned image in the brain of a poet. She lifted her little feet in a manner that transformed boards into clouds. There were moments when she seemed actually to soar.

"She is a little genius!" thought Rezánov enthusiastically. "Anything could be made of a woman like that."

It was not her dancing alone that interested him, but its effect on her audience. The young men had begun with audible expressions of approval. They were now shouting and stamping and clapping. Suddenly, as once more she danced back to the very centre of the room, her bosom heaving, her eyes like stars, her red lips parted, Don Ignacio, long since recovered from his spleen, invaded his pocket and flung a handful of silver at her feet. It was a signal. Gold and silver coins, chains, watches, jewels, bounced over the floor, to be laughingly ignored. Rezánov looked on in amazement, wondering if this were a part of the performance and if he should follow suit. But after a glance at the faces of the young men, lost to everything but their passionate admiration for the unique and beautiful dancing of their Favorita, and when Sturgis, after wildly searching in his pockets, tore a large pearl from the lace of his stock, he doubted no longer—nor hesitated. Fastened by a blue ribbon to the fourth button of his closely fitting coat was a golden key, the outward symbol of his rank at court. He detached it, then made a sudden gesture that caught her attention. For a moment their eyes met. He tossed her the bauble, and me-

chanically she lifted her hand and caught it. Then she laughed confusedly, shrugged her shoulders, bowed graciously to her audience, and signalled to the musicians to stop. Rezánov was at her side in a moment.

"You must be tired," he said. "I insist that you come out on the veranda and rest."

"Very well," she said indifferently; "it is quite time we all went out to the air. Santiago mio, wilt thou bring my reboso—the white one?"

Santiago, more flushed than his sister at her triumphs, fetched the long strip of silk, and Rezánov detached her from her eager court and led her without. Elena Castro followed closely, yet with a cavalier of her own that her friend might talk freely with this interesting stranger. The night air was cool and stimulating. The hills were black under the sparks of white fire in the high arch of the California sky. In the Presidio square were long blue shadows that might have been reflections of the smouldering blue beyond the stars. Rezánov and Concha sat on the railing at the end of the "corridor."

"Is it a custom—all that very material admiration?" he asked.

"A very old one, but not too often followed.

Otherwise we should not prize it. But when some Favorita outdoes herself then she receives the greatest reward that man can think of—gold and silver and jewels. We do not dare to return the tributes in common fashion, but they have a way of appearing where they belong as soon as their owners are supposed to have forgotten the incident. As you are not a Californian, señor, I take the liberty of returning this without any foolish subterfuge." She handed him his contribution. "I thank you all the same. It was a spontaneous act, and I am very proud."

He accepted the key awkwardly, not daring to press it upon her, with the obvious banalities. But he felt a sudden desire to give her something, and, nothing better offering, he gathered half a dozen roses and laid them on her lap.

"I was disappointed that you did not wear your roses to-night," he said. "I associate them with you in my thoughts. Will you put one in your hair?"

She found a place for two and thrust another in the neck of her gown. The rest she held closely in her hands. Then he noticed that she was very white, and again she shivered.

"You are cold and tired," he murmured, his eyes melting to hers. "It was entrancing, but I hope never to see you give so much of yourself to others again." His hand in arranging the reboso touched hers. It lingered, and she stared up at him, helplessly, her eyes wide, her lips parted. She reminded him of a rabbit caught in a trap, and he had a sudden and violent revulsion of feeling. He rose and offered his arm. "I should be a brute if I kept you talking out here. Slip off and go to bed. I shall start the guests, for I am very tired myself."

XI

He did not talk with her again for several days. He called in state, but remained only a few moments. His officers went to several impromptu dances at the Presidio and Mission, but he pleaded fatigue, natural in the damaged state of his constitution, and left the ship only for a gallop over the hills or down the coast with Luis Argüello.

But he had never felt better. At the end of a week his pallor had gone, his skin was tanned and fresh. Even his wretched crew were different men. They were given much leave on shore, and already might be seen escorting the serving-women over the hills in the late afternoon. Rezánov gave them a long rope, although he knew they must be germinating with a mutinous distaste of the Russian north; he kept a strict watch over them and would have given a deserter his due without an instant's pause.

The estafette that had gone with Luis' letters to Monterey had taken one from Rezánov as well, asking permission to pay a visit of ceremony to the Governor. Five days later the plenipotentiary

received a polite welcome to California, and protest against another long journey; the humble servant of the King of Spain would himself go to San Francisco at once and offer the hospitality of California to the illustrious representative of the Emperor of all the Russias.

Rezánov was not only annoyed at the Governor's evident determination that he should see as little as possible of the insignificant military equipment of California, but at the delay to his own plans for exploration. He knew that Luis would dare take him upon no expedition into the heart of the country without the consent of the Governor, and he began to doubt this consent would be given. But he was determined to see the bay, at least, and he no sooner read the diplomatic epistle from Monterey than he decided to accomplish this part of his purpose before the arrival of the Governor or Don José. He knew the materials he had to deal with at the moment, but nothing of those already, no doubt, on their way to the north.

Early in the morning after the return of the courier he wrote an informal note to Doña Ignacia, asking her to give him the honor of entertaining her for a day on the *Juno*, and to bring all the

young people she would. As the weather was so fine, he hoped to see them in time for chocolate at nine o'clock. He knew that Luis, who was pressingly included in the invitation, had left at daybreak for his father's rancho some thirty miles to the south.

There was a flutter at the Presidio when the invitation of the Chamberlain was made known. The compliment was not unexpected, but there had been a lively speculation as to what form the Russian's return of hospitality would take. Concha, whose tides had thundered and ebbed many times since the night of her party, submerging the happy inconsequence of her sixteen years, but leaving her unshaken spirit with wide clarified vision, felt young to-day from sheer reaction. She would listen to no protest from her prudent mother, and smothered her with kisses and a torrent of words.

"But, my Conchita," gasped Doña Ignacia, "I have much to do. Thy father and his excellency come in two days. And perhaps they would not approve—before they are here!—to go on the foreign ship! If Luis were not gone! Ay yi! Ay yi!"

"We go, we go, madre mia! And his excellency will give you a shawl. I feel it! I know it! And

if we go now we disobey no law. Have they ever said we could not visit a foreign ship when they were not here? We are light-headed irresponsible women. And if they should not let us go! If the Governor and the Russian should disagree! Now we have the opportunity for such a day as we never have had before. We should be imbeciles. We go, madre mia, we go!"

So it proved. At a few minutes before nine the Señora Argüello, clad in her best black silk skirt and jacket, a red shawl embroidered with yellow draped over her bust with unconquerable grace, and a black reboso folded about her fine proud head, rode down to the beach with Ana Paula on the aquera behind and Gertrudis Rudisinda on her arm. The boys howled on the corridor, but the good señora felt that she could not too liberally construe the kind invitation of a chamberlain of the Russian Court.

Behind her rode Concha, in white with a pink reboso; Rafaella Sal, Carolina Ximéno, Herminia Lopez, Delfina Rivera, the only other girls at the Presidio old enough to grace such an occasion; Sturgis, who happened to have spent the night at the Presidio, Gervasio, Santiago and Lieutenant Rivera. Castro had returned to Monterey, Sal was

officer of the day, and the other young men had sulkily declined to be the guests of a man who looked as haughty as the Tsar himself and betrayed no disposition to recognize in Spain the first nation of Europe. But no one missed them. The girls, in their flowered muslins and bright rebosos, the men in gay serapes and embroidered botas, looked a fine mass of color as they galloped down to the beach and laughed and chattered as youth must on so glorious a morning. Even Sturgis, always careful to be as nearly one with these people as his different appearance and temperament would permit, wore clothes of green linen, a ruffled shirt, deer skin botas and sombrero.

Three of the ship's canoes awaited the guests, and as not one of the women had ever set foot in a boat, there was a chorus of shrieks. Doña Ignacia murmured an audible prayer and clutched Gertrudis Rudisinda to her breast.

"Madre de Dios! The water! I cannot!" she muttered. But Santiago took her firmly by one elbow, Sturgis by the other, Davidov caught up the children with a reassuring laugh, and in a moment she was trembling in the middle of the canoe. Concha had already leaped into the second and waved a careless little salutation to

the *Juno*. Her eyes sparkled. Her nostrils fluttered. She felt indifferent to everything but the certain pleasure of the day. Rezánov was sure to be charming. What mattered the morrow, and possible nights of doubt, despair, hatred of life and wondering self-contempt?

Rezánov awaited the canoes in the prow of the ship. He wore undress uniform and a cap instead of the cocked hat of ceremony which had excited their awe. He too tingled with a sense of youthful gaiety and adventure. As he helped his guests up the side of the vessel, and listened to the delighted laughter of the girls, saw the dancing eyes of even the haughty and reserved Santiago, he also dismissed the morrow from his thoughts.

As Doña Ignacia was hauled to the deck, uttering embarrassed apologies for bringing the two little girls, Rezánov protested that he adored children, patted their heads, and told off a young sailor to amuse them.

Four tables on the deck were set with coffee, chocolate, Russian tea, and strange sweets that the cook had fashioned from ingredients to which his skilful fingers had long been strangers.

Doña Ignacia sat beside the host, and when she had tried both the tea and the coffee and had

asked for the recipe of the sweets, he said casually: "After breakfast I shall ask you to go down to the cabin for a few moments. I bought the cargo with the *Juno*, and find there are several articles which I shall beg as a great favor to present to my kindest of hostesses and the young girls she has been good enough to bring to my ship. Shawls and ells of cotton and all that sort of thing are of no use to a bachelor, and I hope you will rid me of some of them."

Doña Ignacia lost all interest in the breakfast, and presently, murmuring an excuse, was escorted by Langsdorff down to the cabin. When the light repast was over, Rezánov made a signal to several sailors who awaited commands, and they sprang to the anchor and sails.

"We are going to have a cruise," announced the host to his guests. "The bay is very smooth, there is a fine breeze, we shall neither be becalmed nor otherwise the sport of inclement waters. I know that most of you have never seen this beautiful bay and that you will enjoy its scenery as much as I shall."

He moved to Concha's side and dropped his voice. "This is for you, señorita," he said. "You want change, variety, and I have planned

to give you all that I can in one day. I expect you to be happy."

"I shall be," she said dryly, "if only in watching a diplomat get his way. You will see every corner of our bay, and I shall have the delightful sensation of doing something naughty for which I cannot be held responsible."

He laughed. "I am quite willing that you should understand me," he said. "But it is true that I thought as much of you as of myself."

In a few moments the ship was under way. Santiago and Sturgis had gone down to the cabin to reassure Doña Ignacia, who uttered a loud cry as the *Juno* gave a preliminary lurch. Gervasio and Rivera had opened their eyes as Rezánov abruptly unfolded his plan, but dropped them sleepily before the delight of the girls. After all, it was none of their affair, and what was a bay? If they requested him, as a point of honor, to refrain from examining the battery of Yerba Buena with his glass, their consciences would be as light as their hearts.

As Rezánov stood alone with Concha in the prow of the ship and alternately cast softened eyes on her intense rapt face, and shrewd glances on the ramifications of the bay, he congratulated

himself upon his precipitate action and the collusion of nature. They were sailing east and would turn to the north in a moment. The mountain range bent abruptly at the entrance to the bay, encircling the immense sheet of water in a chain of every altitude and form: a long hard undulating line against the bright blue sky; smooth and dimpled slopes, as round as cones, bare but for the green of their grasses; lofty ridges tapering to hills in the curve at the north but with blue peaks multiplying beyond. There were dense forests in deep cañons on the mountain side, bare and jagged heights, the graceful sweep of valleys, promontories leaping out from the mainland like mammoth crocodiles guarding the bay. The view of the main waters was broken by the largest of the islands, but far away were the hills of the east and the soft blue peaks behind. And over all, hill and valley and cañon and mountain, was a bright opalescent mist. Green, pink, and other pale colors gleamed as behind a thin layer of crystal. Where the sun shone through a low white cloud upon a distant slope there might have been a great globe of iridescent glass illuminated within. The water was a light soft filmy yet translucent blue. Concha gazed with parted lips.

"I never knew before how wonderful it was," she murmured. "I have been taught to believe that only the south is beautiful, and when we had to come here again from Santa Barbara it was exile. But now I am glad I was born in the north."

"I have watched the lights on these hills and islands, and what I could see of the fine lines of the mountains, ever since I came; and were there but villas and castles, these waters would be far more beautiful than the Lake of Como or the Bay of Naples. But I am glad to see trees again. From our anchorage I had but a bare glimpse of two or three. They seem to hide from the western winds. Are they so strong then?"

"We have terrible winds, señor. I do not wonder the trees crouch to the east. But I must tell you our names." She pointed to the largest of the islands, a great bare mass that looked as had it been, when viscid, flung out in long folds from a central peak, concaving here and there with its own weight. Its southern point was on a line with a point of mainland far to the west, and its northern, from their vantage looking to be but a continuation of the curve of the mainland, finished an arc of almost perfect proportions,

whose deep curve was a tumbled mass of hills and one great mountain. "That is Nuestra Señora de los Angeles, and it opens a triple jaw, Luis has told me, at Point Tiburon—you will soon see the straits between. The big rock behind us is Alcatraz, and farther away still is Yerba Buena—that looks like a camel on its knees."

But Rezánov was examining the scene before him. The lines of this bay within a bay were superb, and in its wide embrace, slanting from Point Tiburon toward an inner point two miles opposite was another island, as steep as Alcatraz, but long and waving of outline, with a glimpse of trees on its crest. Rezánov, while he lost nothing of the picturesque beauty surrounding him, was more deeply interested in noting the many foundations, sheltered and solid, for fortifications that would hold these rich lands against the fleets of the world. Never had he seen so many strategic advantages on one sheet of water. The islands farther south he had examined through his glass from the deck of the *Juno* until he knew every convolution they turned to the west.

Concha was directing his attention to the tremendous angular peak rising above the tumbled hills. "That is Mount Tamalpais—the mountain

of peace. It was named by the Indians, not by us. Sometimes it is like a great purple shadow, and at others the clouds fight about it like the ghosts of big sea-gulls." They were sailing past the rounded end of the western inner point of the little bay. It was almost detached from the bare ridge behind and half covered with oaks and willow trees. "That is Point Sausalito. I have often looked at it through the glass and longed for a merienda in the deep shade." She turned to Rezánov with lips apart. "Could we not—oh, señor!—have our dinner on shore?"

"It is only for you to select the spot. We can sail many miles before it is time for dinner, and you may find a place even more to your liking. I fancy we cannot go far here. It looks swampy and shallow. Nothing could be less romantic than to stick in the mud."

"May I ask," said Concha demurely, "how you dare to run the risks of an unknown sheet of water? I have heard it said that there is more than one rock and shoal in this bay."

"I am not as rash as I may appear," replied Rezánov dryly, but smiling. "In 1789 there was a chart of this bay, taken from a Spanish MS., published in London; and I bought it there when

I ran up from the *Nadeshda*—anchored at Falmouth—three years ago. Davidov, who, you may observe, is steering, oblivious to the charms of even Doña Carolina, knows every sounding by heart."

"Oh!" Concha shrugged her shoulders. "The Governor, too, is very clever. It will be a drawn battle. Perhaps I shall remain neutral after all. It would be more amusing." The ship was turning, and she waved her hand to the island between the deep arc of the hilly coast. "I have heard so much of the beauty of that island," she said, "that I have called it La Bellissima, but I never hoped to see anything but the back of its head, from which the wind has blown all the hair. And now I shall. How kind you are, señor!"

"How easily you are made happy," he said with a sigh. "You look like a child."

"To-day I shall be one; and you the kind fairy godfather," she added with some malice. "How old are you, señor?"

"Forty-two."

"That is twenty-six years older than myself. But your excellency might pass for thirty-five," she added politely. "We have all said it. And now that you are not so pale you will soon look

younger—and even more triumphant than when you came."

"I have never felt so triumphant as on this morning, dear señorita. I had not hoped to give you so much pleasure."

Her cheeks were as pink as her reboso, her great black eyes were dancing. Her hands strained at the railing. "I shall see La Bellissima! La Bellissima!" she cried.

They rounded the low broken point of the island, sailed through the racing currents between the lower end of La Bellissima and "Our Lady of the Angels," more slowly past what looked to be a perpendicular forest. From water to crest the gulches and converging spurs of this hillside in the sea were a dense mass of oaks, bays, underbrush; here and there a tall slender tree with a bark like red kid and a flirting polished leaf, at which Concha clapped her hands as at sight of an old friend and called "El Madroño." It was a primeval bit of nature, but sweet and silent and peaceful; there was no suggestion either of gloom or of discourteous beast.

"We shall have our dinner here, Excellency. There on that little beach; and afterward we shall climb to the top. See, there are trails. The Indians have been here."

They stood out through the straits between Point Tiburon and the Isle of the Angels, where the tide ran fast. Then, for the first time, was Rezánov able to form a definite idea of the size and shape of this great natural harbor. To the south it extended beyond the peninsula in an unbroken sheet for some forty English miles. Ten miles to the north there was a gateway between the lower hills which Luis had alluded to as leading into the bay of Saint Pablo, another large body of tide-water, but inferior in depth and beauty to the Bay of San Francisco.

The mist had dissolved. The greens were vivid where the sun shone on island and hill. The woods of Bellissima, the groves of Point Sausalito, the forests in the northern cañons, deepened to purple like that of the great bare sweep of Tamalpais. Only the farther peaks remained a pale misty blue, and were of an indescribable floating delicacy.

Concha pointed to the eastern double cone. 'That is Monte del Diablo. Once they say it spouted fire, but that was long ago, and all our volcanoes are dead. But perhaps not so long ago. The Indians tell the strange story that their grandfathers remembered when this bay was a valley covered with oak trees, and the rivers of the north

flowed through and emptied into Lake Merced and a rift by the Fort. Then came a tremendous earthquake and rent the mountains apart where you came through—we call it the Mouth of the Gulf of the Farallones—the valley sank, the sea flowed in, only these hills that are islands now keeping their heads above the flood. Perhaps it is true, for Drake was close to this bay for a long while and never saw it, and it would have given him a better shelter than the little harbor he found a few miles higher on the coast. I believe it was not here. Madre de Dios, I hope California shakes no more. She would—is it not true, Excellency?—be the most perfect country in all the world did she not have the devil in her."

"Are you afraid of earthquakes?" asked Rezánov, who once more had transferred his comprehensive gaze from battery sites to her face.

"I cross myself. It is like feeling your grave turn over. But I fancy the poor old earth is like the people on her; she gets tired of being good and is all the naughtier for having been sober too long. Don Vincente Rivera is an example; he is cold, haughty, solemn, stern to others and himself, as you see him; but once in a while—Madre de Dios! The Presidio does not sleep for three nights!"

Rezánov laughed heartily, then turned abruptly away. "Come," he said. "I had almost forgotten. Will you ask the others to go to the cabin, while I give orders that dinner shall be served on your island?"

In the cabin, Concha forgot him for a few moments. Her mother, her eyes dwelling fondly upon several shawls she hoped were intended for herself alone, was hushing the baby to sleep in the deep chair of his excellency. Ana Paula was playing with an Alaskan doll she had appropriated without ceremony. Rezánov came in when his guests were assembled, and he had a gift for each; curious objects of Alaskan workmanship for the men, miniature totem poles and fur bordered moccasins; but silk and cotton, linen, shawls and fine handkerchiefs for señora and maiden.

"They are trifles," he said, in response to an enthusiastic chorus. "The cargo I was obliged to take over was a very large one. You must not protest. I shall never miss these things," And he knew that he had sown the seeds of a rapacity similar to that implanted in the worthy bosoms of the priests when they had paid him their promised visit. If the Governor were insensible to diplomacy he would have pressure brought to

bear upon his official integrity from more quarters than one.

"There are also many of the presents rejected by the Mikado, somewhere," he added carelessly. "But I could not find them. They must have found their way to the bottom of the hold during one of the storms we encountered on our way from Sitka."

He certainly looked the fairy godfather, and quite impartial as he distributed his offerings with a chosen word to each; his memory for little characteristics was as remarkable as for names and faces. He had taken off his cap on deck and the breeze had ruffled his thick fair hair, brought the blood to his thin cheeks. The lines of his face, cut by privation and anxiety and illness, had almost disappeared with the renewed elasticity of the flesh, and his blue eyes were wide open, and sparkling in sympathy with the pleasure of his guests and the success of his own strategy. These few insignificant Spaniards dislodged, a half-dozen forts in this harbor, and the combined navies of the world might be defied; while a great chain of hungry settlements fattened and prospered exceedingly on the beneficence of the most fertile land in all the Americas.

XII

The eastern mountains looked very close from the crest of La Bellissima and of a singular transparency and variety of hue. It was as if the white masses of cloud sailing low overhead flung down great splashes of color from prismatic stores stolen from the sun. There was a vivid pale green on the long sweep of a rounding slope, deep violet and pale purple in dimple and hollow, red showing through green on a tongue of land running down from the north; and on the lower ridges and little islands, pale and dark blue, and the most exquisite fields of lavender. This last tint was reflected in the water immediately below the ridge, and farther out there were lakelets of pale green, as if the islands too had the power to mirror themselves when the sea itself was glass.

Santiago, Davidov, Carolina Ximéno, Delfina Rivera, Concha and Rezánov, had climbed to the ridge. The other young people had given out half-way up the steep and tangled ascent and returned to the beach. Doña Ignacia immediately after dinner had frankly asked her host for the

hospitality of his state-room. She and her little ones must have their siesta, and the good lady was convinced that so high and mighty a personage as the Russian Chamberlain was all the chaperon the proprieties demanded.

Four of the party strayed along the crest in search of the first wild pansies. Rezánov and Concha looked under the sloping roof of brittle leaves into dim falling vistas, arches, arbors, caverns, a forest in miniature with natural terraces breaking the precipitous wall of the island.

"I should like to live here," said Concha definitely.

"It would make a fine estate for summer life—or for a honeymoon." He smiled down upon his companion, who stood very tall and straight and proud beside him. "If you conclude to marry your little Bostonian no doubt he will buy it for you," he said.

If he had hoped to see a look of blank dismay after his hours of devotion he was disappointed. She made a little face.

"I do not think I could stand a desert island with the good Weeliam. For that I should prefer one of my own sort—Ignacio, or Fernando. Better still, I could come here and be a hermit."

"A hermit?"

"In some ways that would suit me very well. All human beings become tiresome, I find. I shall have a little hut just below the crest where I can look from my window right into the woods that are so quiet and green and beautiful. That is a thought that has always fascinated me. And when I walk on the crest I can see all the beauty of mountain and bay. What more could I want? What more have you in your world when you know it too well, señor?"

"Nothing; but you might tire, too, of this."

"What of it? It would be the gentle sad ennui of peace, not of disillusion. I think you have suffered much disillusion, señor. How I wish you would tell me all you know of life!"

"God forbid. And do not remind me of ennui and disillusions. I have forgotten both in California. Perhaps, after all, I shall not return to St. Petersburg. There is a vast empire here——"

"But it is not yours or Russia's to rule, Excellency," she interrupted him softly.

He did not color nor start, but met her eyes with his deep amused glance. "I, too, can dream, señorita. Of a great and wonderful kingdom—that

never will exist, perhaps. I have always been called a dreamer, but the habit has grown since I came to this lovely unreal land of yours."

"Have you the intention to take it from us, Excellency?" she asked quietly.

"Would you betray me if you thought I had?"

Her eyes responded for a moment to the magnetism of his, and then she drew herself up.

"No, señor, I could not betray a man who had been our guest, and Spain needs no assistance from a weak girl to hold her own against Russia."

"Well said! I kiss your hands, as they say in Vienna. But we must sail again. I told them to be ready at three o'clock."

Dalliance with the most alluring girl he had ever known was all very well, but the day's work was not yet done. When they returned to the ship he deliberately engaged all the Spaniards in a game of cards, ordered cigarettes and a bowl of punch for their refreshment, and then the *Juno* steered south.

They sailed swiftly past Nuestra Señora de los Angeles and the eastern side of Alcatraz, Rezánov sweeping every inch with his glass; more slowly past the peninsula where it came down in a succession of rough hills almost in a straight line

from the Presidio, ascending to a high outpost of solid rock, whence it turned abruptly to the south. Here for a mile or more was a waving line of steep irregular cliffs, harsh, barren, intersected with gullies. Then the land became suddenly as flat as the sea, save for the shifting dunes, the desert porch of the great fertile valley hidden from the water by the waves of sand, but indicated by its rampart of mountains. The shallower water curved abruptly inward between the rocky mass on the right and a gentler incline and point two miles below. At its head was the "Battery of Yerba Buena," facing the island from which it took its name. Rezánov scrupulously kept his word and did not raise his glass, but one contemptuous glance satisfied his curiosity. His eye roved over the steep hills that were designed to bristle with forts, and, as sometimes happened, when he spoke again to Concha, whom he kept close to his side, for the other girls bored him, his words did not express the workings of his mind.

"Athens has no finer site than this," he said. "I should like to see a white marble city on these hills, and on that plain, when all the sand dunes are levelled. Not in our time, perhaps! But, as

I told you, I have surrendered myself to the habit of dreaming."

Concha shrugged her shoulders and made no reply at the moment. As they sailed toward the east before turning south again, she pointed across the great silvery sheet of water melting into the misty southern horizon, to a high ridge of mountains that looked to be a continuation of the San Bruno range behind the Mission, but slanting farther west with the coast line.

"Those are behind our rancho, señor—Rancho El Pilar, or Las Pulgas, as some prefer. Perhaps my father will take you there. I hope so, for we love to go, and may not too often; my father is very busy here. He is one of the few that has received a large grant of land, and it is because the clergy love him so much they oppose his wish in nothing. Do you see those sharp points against the sky? They are the tops of lofty trees, like the masts of giant ships, and with many rigid arms spiked like the pines. You saw a few of them in the hollow below Tamalpais, but up on those mountains there are miles and miles of mighty forests. No white man has ever penetrated them, nor ever will, perhaps. We have no

use for them, and even if you made this your kingdom, señor, I suppose not many would come with you. Far, far down where the water stops are the Missions of Santa Clara and San José; but I have heard you cannot approach within many miles of the land in a boat."

When they had sailed south for a few moments the boat came about abruptly. Concha laughed. "I had forgotten the chart. I rather hoped you would run on a shoal."

But as they approached the cove of Yerba Buena again she caught his arm suddenly, unconscious of the act, and the little dancing lights of humor in her eyes went out. "Your white city, señor! Ay, Dios! what a city of dreams that can never come true!"

The soft white fog that sometimes, even at this season, came in from the sea, was rolling over the hills between the Battery and the Presidio, wreathing about the rocky heights and slopes. It broke into domes and cupolas, spires and minarets. Great waves rolled over the sand dunes and beat upon the cliffs with the phantoms clinging to its sides. Then the sun struggled through; for a moment the ghostly city was iridescent with a thousand colors. The sun conquered, the mist

shimmered into sunlight, and once more the hills were gray and bare.

Rezánov laughed, but his eyes glowed down upon her. "I am not sure it was there," he said. "I have an idea your imagination and touch acted as a sort of enchanter's wand. The others evidently saw nothing."

"The others saw only fog and shivered. But it was there, señor. We have had a vision. A Russian city! Ay, yi!"

But Rezánov had forgotten the city. Her reboso had fallen and a strand of her hair blew across his face. His lips caught it and his eyes burned. They rounded a headland and the world looked green and young.

"Concha!" he whispered.

Her eyes flashed and melted, she lifted her chin; then burst into a merry ripple of laughter.

"Señor!" she said, "if you make love to me I shall have to compare you with many others, and I might not like the Russian fashion. You are much better as you are—very grand seigneur, iron-handed and absolute, haughty and arrogant, but the most charming person in the world, with ends to gain, even from such humble folk as a handful of stranded Californians. But to sigh!

to languish with the eye! to sing at the grating! I fear that the lightest headed of the caballeros you despise could transcend you in all."

"Very likely! I have not the least intention of sighing or languishing or singing at gratings. But if we were alone I certainly should kiss you."

But her eyes did not melt again at the vision. She flushed hotly with annoyance. "I am a child to you! Were it not that I have read a few books you would find me but a year older than Ana Paula. Well! Regard me as a child and do not attempt to flirt with me again. Shall it be so?"

"As you wish?" Rezánov looked at her half in resentment, half wistfully, then shrugged his shoulders, and called to Davidov to steer for the anchorage. She was quite right; and on the whole he was grateful to her.

XIII

"Concha," said Sturgis abruptly, "will you marry me?"

Concha, who was sitting in the shade of the rose vines on the corridor making a dress for Gertrudis Rudisinda, ran the needle into her finger.

"Madre de Dios!" she cried angrily. "Who would have expected such foolish words from you and now I have pricked my finger and stained the little frock. It will have to be washed before worn and is never so pretty after."

"I am sorry," said Sturgis humbly. "But it seems to me that if a man wishes to marry a maid he should ask her in a straightforward manner, with no preliminary of sighs and hints and serenades—and all sorts of insincere stage play."

"He should at least address her parents first."

"True. I was wholly the American for the moment. May I speak to Don José and Doña Ignacia, Concha?"

"How can I prevent? No, I will not coquet with you, Weeliam. But I am angry that you have thought of such nonsense. Such friends we

were! We have talked and read together by the hour, and my parents have thought no more of it than had it been Santiago. There! You have a new book in your pocket. Why did you not read it to me instead of making love? Let me see it."

"I brought it to read later if you wished, but I came to ask you to marry me and to receive your answer. I never expected to ask you—but—lately—things have changed—life seems, somehow, more real. The thought of losing you has suddenly become terrible."

"You have been drinking Russian tea," said Concha, stitching quietly but flashing him a glance of amusement, not wholly without malice.

"It is true," he replied. "I suppose I never really believed you would marry Raimundo or Ignacio or any of the caballeros. They think and talk of nothing but horse-racing, gambling, cock-fighting, love and cigaritos. I thought of you always here, where at least I could look at you or read with you. But one must admit that this Russian is no ordinary man. I hate him, yet like him more than any I have ever met. Last night I stayed to punch with him, and we talked English for an hour. That is to say, he did; I could have listened to him till morning. Langsdorff says that

he has the greatest possible command of his native tongue, but he speaks English well enough. I wish I could despise him, but I do not believe I even hate him."

"Well?" demanded Concha. She kept her eyes on her work (and the delight that rose in her breast from her voice).

"Well?"

"Why should you hate him?"

"Do you ask me that, Concha, when he makes a fence of himself about you, and his fine eyes—practised is nearer the mark—look at no one else?"

"But why should that cause you jealousy? He is a man of the world, accustomed to make himself agreeable, and I am the daughter of the Comandante."

"He is more in love with you than he knows."

"Do you think so, Weeliam?" Still her voice was innocent and even, although the color rose above the inner commotion. "But even so, what of it? Have not many loved me? Am I to be won by the first stranger?"

"I do not know."

The tumult in Concha turned to wrath and she lifted flashing eyes to his moody face. "Do you

presume to say you are jealous because you think I love him—a stranger I have known but a week —who looks upon me as a child—who has never—never thought—" But her dignity, flying to the rescue, assumed control. Her upper lip curled, her body stiffened for a moment, and she went on with her stitching. "You deserve I should rap your silly little skull with my thimble. You are no better than Ignacio and Fernando. Such scenes as I have had with them! They wanted to fight the Russian! How he would laugh at them! I have threatened they shall both be sent to San Diego if there is any more nonsense." Then curiosity overcame her. "You never had the least, least reason to think I would marry you, and now, according to your own words, you think you have less. Then why, pray, did you address me?"

"Because I am a man, I suppose. I could not sit tamely down and see you go."

She looked at him with a slight access of interest. A man? Perhaps he was, after all. And his well-bred bony face looked very determined, albeit the eyes were wistful. Suddenly she felt sorry for him; and she had never experienced a pang of sympathy for a suitor before. She leaned forward and patted his hand.

"I cannot marry you, dear Weeliam," she said, and never had he seen her so sweet and adorable, although he noted with a pang that her mouth was already drawn with a firmer line. "But what matter? I shall never marry at all. For many years—forty, fifty perhaps— I shall sit here on the veranda, and you shall read to me."

And then she shivered violently. But she set her mouth until it was almost straight, and picked up the little dress. "Not that, perhaps," she said quietly in a moment. "I sometimes think I should like to be a nun, that, after all, it is my vocation. Not a cloistered one, for that is but a selfish life. But to teach, to do good, to forget myself. There are no convents in California, but I could join the Third Order of the Franciscans, and wear the gray habit, and be set aside by the world as one that only lived to make it a little better. To forget oneself! That, after all, may be the secret of happiness. I envy none of my friends that are married. They have the dear children, it is true. But the children grow up and go away, and then one is fat and eats many dulces and the siesta grows longer and longer and the face very brown. That is life in California. I should prefer to work and pray, and "—

And *** to dream always of some beautiful thing that youth promised but never gave. Page 159.

with a flash of insight that made her drop her work again and stare through the rose-vines—"to dream always of some beautiful thing that youth promised but never gave, and that given might have ended in dull routine and a brain too choked with nothing, for memories."

"But, Concha," cried Sturgis eagerly, "I could give you far better than that. I could take you away from here—to Boston, to Europe. You should see—live your life—in the great cities you have dreamed of—that you hardly believe in—were made to enjoy. I have told you of the theatre, the opera—you should go to the finest in the world. You should wear the most beautiful gowns and jewels, go to courts, see the great works of art—I am not trying to bribe you," he stammered, flushing miserably. "God forbid that I should stoop to anything as mean as that. But it all rushed upon me suddenly that I could give you so much that you were made for, with this worthless money of mine. And what happiness to be in Europe with you—what—what——"

His voice trembled and broke, and he dared not look at her. Again she stared through the vines. A splendid and thrilling panorama rose be-

yond them, her bosom heaved, her lips parted. She saw herself in it, and not alone. And not, alas, with the honest youth whose words had inspired it. In a moment she shook her head and turned her kind eyes on the flushed averted face of her suitor.

"I shall never see Europe," she said gently, "and I shall never marry."

"Not if this Russian asks you?" cried Sturgis in his jealous misery.

But Concha's anger did not rise again. "He has no intention of asking a little California girl to share the honors of one of the most brilliant careers in Europe," she said calmly. "Set your mind at rest. He has paid me no more attention than is due my position as the daughter of the Comandante, and perhaps of La Favorita. If I flirt a little and he flirts in response, that is nothing. Is he not then a man? But he will forget me in a month. The world, his world, is full of pretty girls."

"A week ago you would not have said that," said Sturgis shrewdly. "There has been nothing in your life to make you so humble."

"I cannot explain, but he seems to have brought the great world with him. I know, I understand

so many things that I had not dreamed of a week ago. A week! Madre de Dios!"

And Sturgis, who after all was a gallant gentleman, made no comment.

XIV

Governor Arrillaga, Comandante Argüello and Chamberlain Rezánov sat in the familiar sala at the Presidio, content in body after a culinary achievement worthy of Padre Landaeta, but perturbed and alert of mind. Upon the arrival of the two Californian dignitaries in the morning Rezánov had sent Davidov and Langsdorff on shore to assure them of his gratitude and deep appreciation of the hospitality shown himself, his officers and men. The Governor had replied with a fulsome apology for not repairing at once to the *Juno* to welcome his distinguished guest in person, and, pleading his age and the one hundred and seventy-five English miles he had ridden from Monterey, begged him as a younger man to waive informality, and dine at the house of the Comandante that very day. Rezánov had complied as a matter of course, and now he was alone with the men who held his fate in their hands. The dark worn rugged face of Don José, who had been skilfully prepared by his oldest daughter to think well of the Russian, beamed with good-will and interest, in spite of lingering

doubts; but the lank wiry figure of the Governor, who was as dignified as only a blond Spaniard can be, was fairly rigid with the severe formality he reserved for occasions of ceremony—being a gentleman who loved good company and cheer—and his sharp gray eyes were almost shut in the effort to penetrate the designs of this deputy, this symbol, this index in cipher, of a dreaded race. Rezánov smoked calmly, made himself comfortable on the slippery horse-hair chair, though with no loss of dignity, and beat about the bush with the others until the Governor betrayed himself at last by a chance remark.

"What you say of the neighborly instincts of the Russian colonists for the Spanish on this coast interests me deeply, Excellency, but if Russia is at war with Spain——"

"Russia is not at war with Spain," said Rezánov, with a flash of amusement in his half-closed eyes. "Napoleon Bonaparte is encamped about half-way between the two countries. They could not get at each other if they wished. While that man is at large Europe will be at war with him, no two nations with each other."

"Ah!" exclaimed Arillaga. "That is a manner of reasoning that had not occurred to me."

The Comandante had spat at the mention of the usurper's name and muttered "Chinchosa!" and Rezánov, recalling his first conversation with Concha, looked into the honest eyes of the monarchist with a direct and hearty sympathy.

"No better epithet for him," he said. "And the sooner Europe combines to get rid of him the better. But until it does, count upon a common grievance to unite your country and mine."

"Good!" muttered the Governor. "Good! I am glad that nightmare has lifted its bat's wings from our poor California. Captain O'Cain's raid two years ago made me apprehensive, for he took away some eleven hundred of our otter skins and his hunters were Aleutians—subjects of the Tsar. A negro that deserted gave the information that they were furnished the Bostonian by the chief-manager of your Company—Baránhov—whose reputation we know well enough!—for the deliberate purpose of raiding our coast."

Rezánov shrugged his shoulders and replied indifferently: "I will ask Baránhov when I return to Sitka, and write you the particulars. It is more likely that the Aleutians were deserters. This O'Cain would not be the first shrewd Bostonian to tempt them, for they are admirable hunters

and ready for any change. They make a greater demand upon the Company for variety of diet than we are always prepared to meet, so many are the difficulties of transportation across Siberia. When, therefore, the time arrived that I could continue my voyage I determined to come here and see if some arrangement could not be made for a bi-yearly exchange of commodities. We need farinaceous stuffs of every sort. I will not pay so poor a compliment to your knowledge of the northern settlements as to enlarge upon the advantages California would reap from such a treaty."

The Governor, who had permitted himself to touch the back of his chair after the dispersal of the war cloud, stiffened again. "Ah!" he said. "Ah!" He looked significantly at the Comandante, who nodded. "You come on a semi-official mission, after all, then?"

"It is entirely my own idea," said Rezánov carelessly. "The young Tsar is too much occupied with Bonaparte to give more than a passing thought to his colonies. But I have a free hand. Can I arrange the preliminaries of a treaty, I have only to return to St. Petersburg to receive his signature and highest approval. It would be

a great feather in my cap, I can assure your excellencies," he added, with a quick human glance and a sudden curve of his somewhat cynical mouth.

"Um!" said the Governor. "Um!"

But Argüello's stern face had further relaxed. After all, he was but eleven years older than the Russian, and although early struggles and heavy responsibilities and many disappointments had deprived life of much of its early savor, what was left of youth in him responded to the ambition he divined in this interesting stranger. Moreover, the idea of a friendly bond with another race on the lonely coast of the Pacific appealed to him irresistibly. He turned eagerly to the Governor.

"It is a fine idea, Excellency. We need much that they have, and it pleases me to think we should be able to supply the wants of others. Fancy anyone wanting aught of California, except hides, to be sure. I did not think our existence was known save to an occasional British or Boston skipper. It is true we are here only to Christianize savages, but even they have need of much that cannot be manufactured in this God-forsaken land. And we ourselves could be more comfortable—God in heaven, yes! It is well to

think it over, Excellency. Who knows?—we might have a trip to the north once in a while. Life is more excellent with something to look forward to."

"You should have a royal welcome. Baránov is the most hospitable man in Russia, and I might have the happiness to be there myself. I see, by the way, that you have not engaged in the industry of shipbuilding. I need not say that we should supply the ships of commerce with no diminution of your profits. We build at Okhotsk, Petropaulovski, Kadiak and Sitka. Moreover, as the Bostonians visit us frequently, and as your laws prohibit you from trading with them, we would see that you always got such of their commodities as you needed. They come to us for furs, and generally bring much for which we have no use. Captain D'Wolf, from whom I bought the *Juno*, had a cargo I was forced to take over. I unloaded what was needed at Sitka, but as there was no boat going for some months to the other islands, I brought the rest with me, and you are welcome to it, if in exchange you will ballast the *Juno* with samples of your agricultural products; while the treaty is pending I can experiment in our colonies and make sure which are the most adaptable to the market."

"Um!" said the Governor. "Um!"

Rezánov did not remove his cool direct gaze from the snapping eyes opposite.

"I have not the least objection to making a trade that would fill my promuschleniki with joy; but that was by no means the first object of my voyage; which was partly inspired by a desire to see as much of this globe as a man may in one short life, partly to arrange a treaty that would be of incalculable benefit to both colonies and greatly redound to my own glory. I make no pretence of being disinterested. I look forward to a career of ever increasing influence and power in St. Petersburg, and I wish to take back as many credits as possible."

"I understand, I understand!" The Governor rested his lame back once more. "Your ambition is the more laudable, Excellency, since you have achieved so much already. I am not one to balk the honest ambition of any man, particularly when he does me the honor to take me into his confidence. I like this suggested measure. I like it much. I believe it would redound to our mutual benefit and reputation. Is it not so, José?"

The Comandante nodded vigorously. "I am sure of it! I am sure of it! I like it—much, much."

"I will write at once to the Viceroy of Mexico and ask that he lay the matter before the Cabinet and King. Without that high authority we can do nothing. But I see no reason to doubt the issue when we, who know the wants and needs of California, approve and desire. We are doomed to failure in this unwieldy land of worthless savages, but it is the business of the wretched servants of a glorious monarch to do the best they can."

Rezánov had an inspiration. "You might remind the viceroy that Spain and the United States of America have been on the verge of war for years, and suggest the benefit of an alliance with Russia in the case of the new country taking advantage of the situation in Europe to extend its western boundaries——"

Arrillaga had bounced to his feet, his small eyes injected and blazing. "Those damned Bostonians!" he shouted. "I distrusted them years ago. They have too much calculation in their bluntness. They cheated us, sold us short, traded under my very nose, stole our otters, until I ordered them never to drop an anchor in California waters again. If their ridiculous upstart government dares to cast its eyes on California we shall

know how to meet them—the sooner they march on Mexico and lose their conceit the better. How they do brag! Faugh! It is sickening. I shall remember all you say, Excellency, and thank you for the hint."

Rezánov rose, and the Comandante solemnly kissed him on either cheek. "Governor Arrillaga is my guest, Excellency," he said. "I beg that you will dine with us daily—unofficially—that you will regard California as your own kingdom, and come and go at your pleasure. And my daughter begs me to remind you and your young officers that there will be informal dancing every night."

"So far so good," thought Rezánov, as he mounted his horse to return to the *Juno*. "But what of my cargo? I fancy there will be more difficulty in that quarter."

XV

The Chamberlain was in a towering bad humor. As he made his appearance at least two hours earlier than he was expected he found the decks of the *Juno* covered with the skins of seadogs, foxes and birds. He had heard Langsdorff go to his cabin later than usual the night before, and that his pet aversion was the cause of a fresh grievance, but hastened the eruption of his smouldering resentment toward life in general.

"What does this mean?" he roared to the sailor on watch. "Clear them off—overboard, every one of them. What are you staring at?"

The sailor, who was a "Bostonian," an inheritance with the ship, opened his mouth in favor of the unfortunate professor, but like his mates, he stood in much awe of a master whose indulgence demanded implicit obedience in return. Without further ado he flung the skins into the sea.

Rezánov, to do him justice, would not have acted otherwise had he risen in the best of tempers. He had inflicted himself with the society

of the learned doctor that he might always have a physician and surgeon at hand, as well as an interpreter where Latin was the one door of communication. He should pay him handsomely, make him a present in addition to the sum agreed upon, but he had not the least intention of giving up any of the *Juno's* precious space to the vagaries of a scientist, nor to submit to the pollution of her atmosphere. Langsdorff was his creature and the sooner he realized the fact the better.

"Remember," he said to the sailor, "no more of this, or it will be the worse for you— What is this?" He had come upon a pile of ducks, gulls, pelicans, and other aquatic birds. "Are these the cook's or the professor's?"

"The professor's, Excellency."

"Overboard." And the birds followed the skins.

Rezánov turned to confront the white and trembling Langsdorff. The naturalist was enfolded in a gorgeous Japanese dressing-gown, purple brocade embroidered with gold, that he had surreptitiously bought in the harbor of Nagasaki. To Rezánov it was like a red rag to a bull; but the Professor was oblivious at the moment of the tactless garment. His eyes were

glaring and the extended tip of his nose worked like a knife trying to leap from its sheath. But although he occasionally ventured upon a retort when goaded too far in conversation, he was able to curb his just indignation when the Chamberlain was in a bad temper. In that vague gray under winking stars in their last watch, Rezánov seemed to tower six feet above him.

"Excellency," he murmured.

"Well?"

"My—my specimens."

"Your what?"

"The cause of science is very dear to me, Excellency."

"So it is to me—in its proper place. Were those skins yours?" His voice became very suave. "I am sorry you should have fatigued yourself for nothing, but I am forced to remind you that this is not an expedition undertaken for the promotion of natural history. I am not violating my part in the contract, I believe. Upon our arrival at Sitka you are at liberty to remain as my guest and make use of the first boat that sails for this colony; but for the present I beg that you will limit yourself to the requirements of your position on my staff."

He turned his back and ordered a canoe to be lowered. Since the arrival of the Governor and Comandante, now three days ago, all restrictions on his liberty had been removed, and the phrases of hospitality were a trifle less meaningless. He had been asked to give his word to keep away from the fortifications, and as he knew quite as much of the military resources of the country as he desired, he had merely suppressed a smile and given his promise.

This morning he wanted nothing but a walk. He had slept badly, the blood was in his head, his nerves were on edge. He went rapidly along the beach and over the steep hills that led to the northeastern point of the peninsula. But he had taken the walk before and did not turn his head to look at the great natural amphitheatre formed by the inner slopes of those barren heights, so uninteresting of outline from the water. Once when Luis had left him to go down with an order to the Battery of Yerba Buena he had examined it critically and concluded that never had there been so fine a site for a great city. Nor a more beautiful, with the broken line of the San Bruno mountains in the distance and a glimpse of the Mission valley just beyond this vast

colosseum, whose steep imposing lines were destined by nature to be set with palaces and bazaars, minarets and towers and churches, with a thousand gilded domes and slender crosses glittering in the crystal air and sun-flood. If not another Moscow, then an Irkutsk in his day, at least.

But he did not give the chosen site of his city a glance to-day, although in this gray hour before dawn when mystery and imagination most closely embrace, he might at another time have forgotten himself in one of those fits of dreaming that slipped him out of touch with realities, and sometimes precipitated action in a manner highly gratifying to his enemies.

But much as he loved Russia, there were times when he loved his own way more, and since the arrival of Governor Arrillaga he was beginning to feel as he had felt in the harbor of Nagasaki. Not a word since that first interview had been said of his cargo; nor even of the treaty, although nothing could have been more natural than the discussion of details. Whenever he had delicately broached either subject he had been met with a polite indifference, that had little in common with the cordiality otherwise shown him. He foresaw that he might be obliged to reveal the

more pressing object of his visit without further diplomacy, and the thought irritated him beyond endurance.

Whether Concha were giving him her promised aid he had no means of discovering, and herein lay another cause of his general vexation. He had dined every day at the Comandante's, danced there every night. Concha had been vivacious, friendly—impersonal. Not so much as a coquettish lift of the brow betrayed that the distinguished stranger eclipsed the caballeros for the moment; nor a whispered word that he retained the friendship she had offered him on the day of their meeting. He had not, indeed, had a word with her alone. But his interest and admiration had deepened. It was evident that her father and the Governor adored her, would deny her little. Her attitude to them was alternately that of the petted child and the chosen companion. As her mother was indisposed she occupied her place at the table, presiding with dignity, guiding the conversation, revealing the rare gift of making everyone appear at his best. In the evening she had sometimes danced alone for a few moments, but more often with her Russian guests, and readily learning the English country-dances

they were anxious to teach. Rezánov would have found the gay informality of these evenings delightful had his mind been at ease about his Sitkans, and Concha a trifle more personal. He had begun by suspecting that she was manœuvring for his scalp, but he was forced to acquit her; for not only did she show no provocative favor to another, but she seemed to have gained in dignity and pride since his arrival, actually to have kissed her hand in farewell to the childhood he had been so slow in divining; grown—he felt rather than analyzed—above the pettiness of coquetry. Once more she had stirred the dormant ideals of his early manhood; there were moments when she floated before his inner vision as the embodiment of the world's beauty. Nor ever had there been a woman born more elaborately equipped for the position of a public man's mate; nor more ingenerate, perhaps, with the power to turn earth into heaven.

He had wondered humorously if he were fallen in love, but although he retained little faith in the activities of the heart after youth, he was beginning seriously to consider the expedience of marrying Concha Argüello. He had not intended to marry again, and it was this old and passionate

love of personal freedom that alone held him back, for nothing would be so advantageous to the Russian colonies in their present crisis as a strong individual alliance with California. Concha Argüello was the famous daughter of its first subject, and with the powerful friends she would bring to her husband, the consummation of ends dearer to his heart than aught on earth would be a matter of months instead of years. And he thrilled with pride as he thought of Concha in St. Petersburg. Two years of court life and she would be one of the greatest ladies in Europe. That he could win her he believed, and without undue vanity. He had much to offer an ambitious clever girl conscious of her superiority to the men of this province of Spain, and chafing at the prospect of a lifetime in a bountiful desert. His only hesitation lay in his own doubt if she were worth the loss of his freedom, and all that word involved to a man of his position and adventurous spirit.

He shrugged his shoulders at this argument; he had walked off some of his ill-humor, and reverted willingly to a theme that alone had given him satisfaction during the past few days. At the same time he made a motion as if flinging aside an old burden.

"It is time for such nonsense to end," he thought contemptuously. "And in truth these three years have wrought such changes in me I doubt I should have patience for an hour of the old trifling. My greatest need from this time on, I fancy, is work. I could never be idle a month again. And when a man is in love with work—and power—and has passed forty—does he want a constant companion? That is the point. At my time of life power exercises the most irresistible and lasting of all fascinations. A man that wins it has little left for a woman."

He had reached the summit of the rocky outpost, the highest of the hills where the peninsula turned abruptly to the south, and, scrupulously refraining from a downward glance at the Battery of Yerba Buena, stood looking out over the bay to the eastern mountains: dark, almost formless, wrapped in the intense and menacing mystery of that last hour before dawn.

"Señor!" called a low cautious voice.

Rezánov stepped hastily back from the point of the bluff and glanced about in wonder, his pulses suddenly astir. But he could see no one.

"Señor!"

This time the direction was unmistakable, and

he went to the edge of the plateau facing the south and looked over. Half-way down a shallow and almost perpendicular gully, he saw a girl forcing a mustang up the harsh loose path. The girl's white and oval face looked from the folds of a black reboso like the moon emerging from clouds, and its young beauty was out of place in that wild and forbidding setting. She reined in her horse as she caught his eye and beckoned superfluously; then guided her mustang to a little ledge where he could plant his feet firmly, permitting her to reassume her usual pride of carriage and averting the danger of a sudden scramble or need of assistance.

As Rezánov reached her side she gave him a grave and friendly smile, but no opportunity to kiss her hand.

"I have followed your excellency," she said. "I saw you leave the *Juno,* and as I am often up at this hour, and as no one else ever is, my father ignores the fact that I sometimes ride alone. I have never come as far as this before, but there is something I wish to say to you, and there is no opportunity at home. I asked Santiago to find me one last night, but he was in a bad temper and would not. Men! However—I suppose you have heard nothing of the cargo?"

"I have not," said Rezánov grimly, although acutely sensible that the subject suited neither his mood nor the hour.

"But the Governor has! Madre de Dios! all the women of the Presidio and the Mission have pestered him. They are sick with jealousy at the shawls you gave us that day—those that did not go to the ship. How clever of your excellency to give us just enough for ourselves and nothing for our friends! And those that went want more and more. They have called upon him—one, two, four, and alone. They have wept and scolded and pleaded. I did not know until yesterday that your commissary had also shown the things to the priests from San José—Father José Uria and Father Pedro de la Cueva. They and the priests of San Francisco have argued with the Governor not once but three times. Dios! how his poor excellency swore yesterday. He threatened to return at once to Monterey. I flew into a great rage and threatened in turn to follow with all the other girls and all the priests, vowed he should not have one moment of peace until that cargo was ours."

"Well?" asked Rezánov sharply, in spite of his amusement.

Concha shook her head. "When he does not

swear he answers only: 'Buy if you have the money. I have never broken a law of Spain and I shall not begin in my old age.' He knows well that we have no money to send out of New Spain; but I have conceived a plan, señor. It is for you, not for me, to suggest it. You will never betray that I have been your friend, Excellency?"

"I will swear it if you wish," said Rezánov frigidly.

"Pardon, señor. If I thought you could I should not be here. One often says such things. This is the plan: You shall suggest that we buy your wares, and that you buy again with our money. The dear Governor only wants to save his conscience an ache, for we have driven him nearly distracted. I am sure he will consent, for you will know how to put it to him very diplomatically."

"But if he refused to understand, or his conscience remained obdurate? I should then have neither cargo nor ballast."

"He would never trick a guest, nor would he let the money go out of the country. And he knows well how much we need your cargo and longs to be able to state in his reports that he sold you a hold full of breadstuffs. Moreover, I

think the time has come to tell him of the distress at Sitka. He is very soft-hearted and is now in that distracted state of mind where only one more argument is required. I hope I have given you good advice, Excellency. It is the best I can think of. I have given it much thought, and the terrible state of those miserable creatures has kept me awake many nights. I must return now. Will your excellency kindly remain here until I am well on my way?—and then return by the beach? I shall go as I came, through the valley. Neither of us can be seen from the Battery."

"I will obey all your instructions," said Rezánov. But he did not move, nor could the mustang. Concha smiled and pointed to the other side of the cleft, which was about as wide as a narrow street.

"Pardon, señor, I cannot turn."

For a moment Rezánov stared at her, through her. Then his heavy eyes opened and flashed. It seemed to him that for the first time he saw how beautiful, how desirable she was, set in that gray volcanic rock with the heavens gray above her and the stars fading out. It was not the bower he would have imagined for the wooing of a mate, but neither moonlight nor the romantic

glades of La Bellissima could have awakened in him a passion so sudden and final. Her face between the black folds turned whiter and she shrank back against the jagged wall; and when his eyes flashed again with a wild eager hope she involuntarily crossed herself. He threw himself against the horse and snatched her down and kissed her as he had kissed no woman yet, recognizing her once for all.

When he finally held her at arm's length for a moment he laughed confusedly.

"The Russian bear is no longer a figure of speech," he said. "Forgive me. I forgot that you are as tender as you are strong."

Her hands were tightly clasped against her breast, and the breath was short in her throat, but she made no protest. Her eyes were radiant, her mouth was the only color in that gray dawn. In a moment she too laughed.

"Dios de mi alma! What will they say? A heretic! If Tamalpais fell into the sea it would not make so great a sensation in this California of ours where civilized man exists but to drive heathen souls into the one true church."

"Will it matter to you? Are you strong enough? It will be only a question of time to win them over, if you are."

She nodded emphatically. "I was born with strength. Now—Dios!—now I can be stronger than the King of Spain himself, than the Governor, my parents and all the priests— You would not become a Catholic?" she asked abruptly.

He shook his head, although he still smiled at her. "Not even for you."

"No," she said thoughtfully. "I will confess —what matters it?—I often dreamed that this would come just because I believed it would not. But why should one control the imagination when it alone can give us happiness for a little while? I gave it reign, for I thought that one-half of all my life was to be passed in that unreal but by no means niggardly world. And I thought of everything. To change your religion would mean the ruin of your career; moreover, it is not a possibility of your character. Were it I think I should not love you so much. Nor could I bear to think of any change in you. Only it will be harder—longer." Then she stretched out her hand, and closed and opened it slowly. The most obtuse could not have failed to read the old simile of the steel in the velvet. "I shall win because it is my nature—and my power—to hold what I grasp."

"But if they persistently refuse——"

"Dios!" she interrupted him. "Do you think that your love is greater than mine? I was born with a thousand years of love in me and had you not come I should have gone alone with my dreams to the grave. I am all women in one, not merely Concha Argüello, a girl of sixteen." She clasped her hands high above her head, lifting her eyes to the ashen vault so soon to yield to the gay brush of dawn.

"Before all that great mystery," she said solemnly, "I give myself to you forever, how much or how little that may mean here on earth. Forever."

XVI

The Comandante of the San Francisco Company sat opposite Rezánov with his mouth open, the lines of his strong face elongated and relaxed. It was the hour of siesta, and they were alone in the sala.

"Mother of God!" he exclaimed. "Mother of God! Are you mad, Excellency?"

"No man was ever saner," said Rezánov cheerfully. "What better proof would you have than this final testimony to Doña Concha's perfections?"

"But it cannot be! Surely, Excellency, you realize that? The priests! Ay yi! Ay yi!"

"I think I understand the priests. Persuade the Governor to buy my cargo and they will look upon me as an amicus humani generis to whom common rules do not apply. And I have won their sincere friendship."

"You have won mine, señor. But, though I say it, there is no more devout Catholic in the Californias than José Argüello. Do you know what they call me? El santo. God knows I am

not, but it is not for want of the wish. Did I give my daughter to a heretic, not only should I become an outcast, a pariah, but I should imperil my everlasting soul and that of my best beloved child. It is impossible, Excellency—unless, indeed, you embrace our faith."

"That is so impossible that the subject is not worth the waste of a moment. But surely, Comandante, in your excitement at this perfectly natural issue you are misrepresenting yourself. I do not believe, devout Catholic as you are, that your soul is steeped in fanaticism. You are known far and wide as the first and most intelligent of his Catholic Majesty's subjects in New Spain. When you have my word of honor that your daughter's faith shall never be disturbed, it is impossible you should believe that marriage with me would ruin her chances of happiness in the next world. But I doubt if your soul and conscience will have the peace you desire if you ruin her happiness in this. What pleasure do you find in the thought of an old age companioned by a heart-broken daughter?"

Don José turned pale and hitched his chair. "Other maids have been balked when young, and have forgotten. Concha is but sixteen——"

"She is also unique. She will marry me or no one. Of that I am as certain as that she is the woman of women for me."

"How can you be so certain?" asked the Comandante sharply. "Surely you have had little talk alone with her?"

"The heart has a language of its own. Recall your own youth, señor."

"It is true," said Don José with a heavy sigh, as he had a fleeting vision of Doña Ignacia, slim and lovely at the grating, with a rose in her hair. "But this tremendous passion of the heart—it passes, señor, it passes. We love the good wife, but we sometimes realize that we could have loved another good wife as well."

"That is a bit of philosophy I should have uttered myself, Comandante—yesterday. But there are women and women, and your daughter is one of the chosen few who take from the years what the years take from others. I am not rushing into matrimony for the sake of a pair of black eyes and a fine figure. I have outlived the possibility of making a fool of myself if I would. Before I realized how deeply I loved your daughter I had deliberately chosen her out of all the women I have known, as my friend and companion for

the various and difficult ways of life which I shall be called upon to follow. Your daughter will have a high place at the Russian Court, and she will occupy it as naturally as had I found her in Madrid and you in the great position to which your attainments and services entitle you."

Don José, despite his consternation, titillated agreeably. He privately thought no one in New Spain good enough for his daughter, and his weather-beaten self was not yet insensible to the rare visitation of winged darts tipped with honey. But the situation was one of the most embarrassing he had ever been called upon to face, and perhaps for the first time in his direct and honest life his resolution was shaken in a crisis.

"Believe me, your excellency, I appreciate the honor you have done my house, and I will add with all my heart that never have I liked any man more. But—Mother of God! Mother of God!"

Rezánov took out his cigarette case, a superb bit of Russian enamel, graven with the Imperial arms, and a parting gift from Alexander. He passed it to his host, who had developed a preference for Russian cigarettes.

"There are other things to consider besides the happiness of your daughter and myself," he re-

marked. "This alliance would mean the consolidation of Spanish and Russian interests on the Pacific coast. It would mean the protection of California in the almost certain event of 'American' aggression. And I hear that a courier brought word again yesterday that the Russian and the Spanish fleets had sailed for these waters. I do not believe a word of it; but should it be true, I would remind you of two things: that I have the powers of the Tsar himself in this part of the world, and that the Russian fleet is likely to arrive first."

Again the Comandante moved uneasily. The news from Mexico had kept himself and the Governor awake the better part of the night. He fully appreciated the importance of this powerful Russian's friendship. Nothing would bind and commit him like taking a Californian to wife. If only he had fallen in love with Carolina Ximéno or Delfina Rivera! Don José had an uneasy suspicion that his scruples as a Catholic might have gone down before his sense of duty to this poor California. But a heretic in his own family! He was justly renowned for his piety. Aside from the wrath of the church, the mere thought of one of his offspring in matrimonial community be-

yond its pale made him sick with repugnance. And yet—California! And he would have selected Rezánov for his daughter out of all men had he been of their faith. And he was deeply conscious of the honor that had descended, however unfruitfully, upon his house. Madre de Dios! How would it end? Suddenly he felt himself inspired. In blissful ignorance of her subtle feminine rule, he reminded himself that Concha's mind was the child of his own. When she saw his embarrassment, filial duty and woman's wit would extricate them both with grace and avert the enmity of the Russian even though the latter's more personal interest in California must die in his disappointment. He would make her feel the weight of the stern paternal hand, and then indicate the part she had to play.

He rang a bell and directed the servant to summon his daughter, drew himself up to his full height and set his rugged face in hard lines. As Concha entered he looked the Comandante, the stern disciplinarian, every inch of him.

There was no trace of the siesta in Concha's cheeks. They were very white, but her eyes were steady and her mouth indomitable as she walked down the sala and took the chair Rezánov placed

for her. Except for her Castilian fairness, she looked very like the martinet sitting on the other side of the table. The Comandante regarded her silently with brows drawn together. Dimly, he felt apprehension, wondered, in a flash of insight, if girls held fast to the parental recipe, or recombined with tongue in the cheek. The bare possibility of resistance almost threw him into panic, but he controlled his features until the effort injected his eyes and drew in his nostrils. Concha regarded him calmly, although her heart beat unevenly, for she dreaded the long strain she foresaw.

"My daughter," said Don José finally, his tones harsh with repressed misgiving, "do you suspect why I have sent for you?"

"I think that his excellency wishes to marry me," replied Concha; and the Comandante was so staggered by the calm assurance of her tone and manner that his pent-up emotion exploded.

"Dios!" he roared. "What right have you to know when a man wishes to marry you? What manner of Spanish girl is this? Truly has his excellency said that you are not as other women. The place for you is your room, with bread and water for a week. Sixteen!"

"Ignacio was born when my mother was sixteen," said Concha coolly.

"What of that? She married whom and when she was told to marry."

"I have heard that you serenaded nightly beneath her grating——"

"So did others."

"I have heard that when of all her suitors her father chose one more highly born, a gentleman of the Viceroy's court, she pined until they gave their consent to her marriage with you, lest she die."

"But I was a Catholic! The prejudice against my birth was an unworthy one. I had distinguished myself. And she had the support of the priests."

"It is my misfortune that M. de Rezánov is not a Catholic, but it will make no difference. I shall not fall ill, for I am like you, not like my dear mother—and the education you have given me is very different from hers. But I shall marry his excellency or no one, and whether I marry him or live alone with the thought of him until the end of my mortal days, I do not believe that my soul will be imperilled in the least."

"You do not!" shouted the irate Spaniard.

"How dare you presume to decide such a question for yourself? What does a woman know of love until she marries? It is nothing but a sickening of the imagination before; and if the man goes, the doctor soon comes."

"You may not have intended—but you have taught me to think for myself. And I have seen others besides M. de Rezánov—the flower of California and more than one fine gentleman from Mexico. I will have none of them. I will marry the man of my choice or no one. It may be that I know naught of love. If you wish you may think that my choice of a husband is determined by ambition, that I am dazzled with the thought of court life in St. Petersburg, of being the consort of a great and wealthy noble. It matters not. Love or ambition, I shall marry this Russian or I shall never marry at all."

"Mother of God! Mother of God!" Don José's face was purple. The veins swelled in his neck. He was the more wroth because he recognized his own daughter and his own handiwork, because he saw that he confronted a Toledo blade, not a woman's brittle will, such as he had grown old in knowledge of. Concha regarded him calmly.

"If you refuse your consent you will lose me in another way. I may not be able to marry as I wish, but I will have no worldly alternative. I shall join the Third Order of the Franciscans, and enter a convent as soon as one is built in California. To that you cannot withhold your consent, or they no longer would call you El Santo."

Don José leapt from his chair. "Go to your room!" he thundered. "And do not dare to leave it without my permission——"

But Concha sprang forward and flung herself upon his neck. She rubbed her warm elastic cheek against his own in the manner he loved, and softened her voice. "Papacito mio, papacito mio," she pleaded. "Thou wilt not refuse thy Concha the only thing she has ever begged of thee. And I beg! I beg! Papa mio! I love him! I love him!" And she broke into wild weeping and kissed him frantically, while Rezánov, who had followed her plan of attack and resistance in silent admiration, did not know whether he should himself be moved to tears or further admire.

Don José pushed her from him with a heavy sob and hastily left the room, oblivious in the confusion of his faculties of the boon he conferred on the lovers. Concha dried her eyes, but her

face was deathly pale. It had not been all acting, by any means, and she was beginning to feel the tyranny of sleepless nights; and the joy and wonder of the morning had left her with but a remnant of endurance for the domestic battleground.

"Go," she whispered. "Return for the dance to-night as if nothing had happened—I forgot, there is to be a bull-bear fight in the square. So much the better, for it is in your honor, and you could not well remain away. There is much trouble to come, but in the end we shall win."

XVII

The muscles in Doña Ignacia's cheeks fell an inch as she listened, dumfounded, to the tale her husband poured out. To her simple aristocratic soul Rezánov had loomed too great a personage to dream of mating with a Californian; and as her sharp maternal instinct had recognized his personal probity, even his gallantries had seemed to her no more consequent than the more catholic trifling of his officers.

"Holy Mary!" she whimpered when her voice came back. "Holy Mary! A heretic! And he would take our Concha from us! And she would go! To St. Petersburg! Ten thousand miles! To the priests with her—now—this very day!"

Concha had thrown herself on her bed in belated hope of siesta, when Malia (Rosa had been sent to the house of Don Mario Sal in the valley) entered with the message that she was to accompany her parents to the Mission at once. She rose sullenly, but in the manifold essentials of a girl's life she had always yielded the implicit obedience exacted by the Californian parent. In

a few moments she was riding out of the Presidio beside her father. Doña Ignacia jolted behind in her carreta, a low and clumsy vehicle, on solid wheels and springless, drawn by oxen, and driven by a stable-boy on a mustang. The journey was made in complete silence save for the maledictions addressed to the oxen by the boy, and an occasional: "Ay yi!" "Madre de Dios!" "Sainted Mary, but the sun bores a hole in the head," from Doña Ignacia, whose increasing discomfort banished wrath and apprehension for the hour.

Don José did not even look at his daughter, but his face was ten years older than in the morning. He had begun dimly to appreciate that she was suffering, and in a manner vastly different from the passionate resentment he had seen her display when the contents of a box from Mexico disappointed her, or she was denied a visit to Monterey. That his best-beloved child should suffer tore his own heart, but he merely cursed Rezánov and resolved to do his best to persuade the Governor to yield to his other demands, that California might be rid of him the sooner.

Father Abella was walking down the long outer corridor of the Mission reading his breviary, and praying he might not be diverted from righteous-

ness by the comforting touch of his new habit, when he looked up and saw the party from the Presidio floundering over the last of the sand hills. He shuffled off to order refreshments, and returned in time to disburden the carreta of Doña Ignacia —no mean feat—volubly delighted in the visit and the gossip it portended. But as he offered his arm to lead her into the sala, she pushed him aside and pointed to Concha, who had sprung to the ground unassisted.

"She has come to confess, padre!" she exclaimed, her mind under the deep tiled roof of the corridor readjusting itself to tragedy. "I beg that you will take her at once. Padre Landaeta can give us chocolate and we will tell our terrible news to him and receive advice and consolation."

Father Abella, not without a glimmering of the truth, for better than anyone he understood the girl he had confessed many times, besides himself having succumbed to the Russian, led the way to the confessional in some perturbation of spirit. He walked slowly, hoping that the long cool church, its narrow high windows admitting so scant a meed of sunlight that no one of its worshippers had ever read the painted legends on

the walls, and even the stations were but deeper bits of shade, would attune her mind to holy things, and throw a mantle of unreality over those of the world.

He covered his face with his hand as she told her story. This she did in a few words, disjointed, for she was both tired and seething. For a few moments afterward there was a silence; the good priest was increasingly disturbed and by no means certain of his course. He was astonished to feel a tug at his sleeve. Before he could reprove this impenitent child for audacity she had raised herself that she might approach her lips more closely to his ear.

"Mi padre!" she whispered hoarsely, "you will take my part! You will not condemn me to a life of misery! I am too proud to speak openly to others—but I love this man more than my soul —more than my immortal soul. Do you hear? I am in danger of mortal sin. Perhaps I am already in that state. You cannot save me if he goes. I will not pray. I will not come to the church. I will be an outcast. If I marry him I will be a good Catholic to the end of my days. If I marry him I can think of other things besides—of my church, my father, my mother, my sisters,

brothers. If he goes I shall pass my life thinking of nothing but him, and if it be true that heretics are doomed to hell, then I will live so that I may go to hell with him."

In spite of his horror the priest was thrilled by the intense passion in the voice so close to his ear. Moreover, he knew women well, this good padre, for even in California they differed little from those that played ball with the world. So he dismissed the horror and spoke soothingly.

"What you have said would be mortal sin, my daughter, were it not that you are laboring under strong and natural excitement; and I shall absolve you freely when you have done the penance I must impose. You have always been such a good child that I am able to forgive you even in this terrible moment. But, my daughter, surely you know that this marriage can never take place——"

"It shall! It shall!"

"Control yourself, my daughter. You cannot bring this man into the true church. His character is long since formed and cast—it is iron. Even love will not melt it. Were he younger——"

"I should hate him. All young men are insufferable to me—always have been. I have

found my mate, and have him I will if I have to hide in the hold of his ship. Ah, padre mio, I know not what I say. But you will help me. Only you can. My father thinks you as wise as a saint. And there are other things—my head turns round—I can hardly think—but you dare not lose the friendship of this Russian. And my marriage to him would be as much for the good of the Missions as for California herself. If you champion our cause, point out that not only would it be a great match for me, but that many ends would be lost by ruining my life, the Governor will find himself in a position to grant your prayers for the cargo, particularly if you first persuaded my father—so long they have been friends, the Governor could not resist if he joined our forces. What is one girl that she should be held of greater account than the welfare of this country to which you are devoting your life? The happier are your converts the more kindly will they take to Christianity—which they do not love as yet!—the more faithful and contented will they be, in the prospect of the luxuries and the toys and the trinkets of the Russian north. What is one girl against the friendship of Russia for Spain? Who am I that I should weigh a peseta in the scale? ”

"You are Concha Argüello, the flower of all the maidens of California, and the daughter of the best of our men," replied Father Abella musingly. "And until to-day there has been no Catholic more devout——"

"It lies with you, mi padre, whether I continue to be the best of Catholics or become the most abandoned of heretics. You know me better than anyone. You know that I will not weaken and bend and submit, like a thousand other women. I could be bad—bad—bad—and I will be! Do you hear?" And she shook his arm violently, while her hoarse voice filled the church.

"My child! My child! I have always believed that you had it in you to become a saint. Yes, yes, I feel the strength and maturity of your nature, I know the lengths to which it might lead another; but you could not be bad, Conchita. I have known many women. In you alone have I perceived the capacity for spiritual exaltation. You are the stuff of which saints and martyrs are made. The violent will, the transcendent passions —they have existed in the greatest of our saints, and been conquered."

"I will not conquer. I— Oh, padre—for the love of heaven——"

He left the box hastily and lifted her where she had fallen and carried her into the room adjoining the church. He laid her on the floor, and ran for Doña Ignacia who, refreshed with wine and chocolate, came swiftly. But when Concha, under practical administrations and maternal endearments, finally opened her eyes, she pushed her mother coldly aside, rose and steadied herself against the wall for a moment, then returned to the church, closing the door behind her.

When a woman has borne thirteen children in the lost corners of the world, with scarce a thought in thirty years for aught else save the husband and his comforts, it is not to be expected that her wits should be rapiers or her vocabulary distinguished. But Doña Ignacia's unresting heart had an intelligence of its own, and no inner convulsion could alter the superb dignity of mien which Nature had granted her. As she rose and confronted Father Abella he moved forward with the instinct to kiss her hand, as he had seen Rezánov do.

"Mi padre," she said, "Concha is the first of my children to push me aside, and it is like a blow on the heart; but I have neither anger nor resentment, for it was not the act of a child to its parent, but of one woman to another. Alas!

this Russian, what has he done, when her own mother can give her no comfort? We all love when young, but this is more. I loved José so much I thought I should die when they would have compelled me to marry another. But this is more. She will not die, nor even go to bed and weep for days, but it is more. I should not have died, I know that now, and in time I should have married another, and been as happy as a woman can be when the man is kind. Concha will love but once, and she will suffer—suffer— She may be more than I, but I bore her and I know. And she cannot marry him. A heretic! I no longer think of the terrible separation. Were he a Catholic I should not think of myself again. But it cannot be. Oh, padre, what shall we do? ''

They talked for a long while, and after further consultation with Don José and Father Landaeta, it was decided that Concha should remain for the present in the house of Juan Moraga, where she could receive the daily counsels of the priests, and be beyond the reach of Rezánov. Meanwhile, all influence would be brought to bear upon the Governor that the Russian might be placated even while made to realize that to loiter longer in California waters would be but a waste of precious time.

XVIII

THERE was no performance after all in the Presidio square that night, for the bear brought in from the hills to do honor to the Russians died of excitement, and it rained besides. Rezánov made the storm his excuse for not dining and dancing as usual at the house of the Comandante. But the relations between the Presidio and the *Juno* during the next few days were by no means strained. Davidov and Khostov were always with the Spanish officers, drinking and card playing, or improving their dancing and Spanish with the girls, whose guitars were tuned for the waltz day and night. The dignitaries met as usual and conversed on all topics save those paramount in the minds of each. Nevertheless, there were three significant facts as well known to Rezánov as had they been aired to his liking.

He had sought an interview with Father Abella, and tactfully ignoring the question of his marriage, had persuaded that astute and influential priest to make the proposition regarding his cargo that Concha had suggested. The priest, backed

by his three coadjutors, had made it, and been repulsed with fury. From another quarter Rezánov learned that during his absence little else was discussed in the house of the Comandante save his formidable matrimonial project, and the supposed designs of his country. Troops had been ordered from the south to reinforce the San Francisco garrisons, and were even now massed at Santa Clara, within a day's march of the bay.

About a mile from the Presidio and almost opposite the *Juno's* anchorage were six great stone tubs sunken in the ground and filled by a spring of clear water. Here, once a week, the linen, fine and heavy, of Fort and Presidio was washed, the stoutest serving women of households and barracks meeting at dawn and scrubbing for half a day. Rezánov had watched the bright picture they made—for they wore a bit of every hue they could command—with a lazy interest, which quickened to thirst when he heard that they were the most reliable newsmongers in the country. In every Presidial district was a similar institution, and the four were known as the "Wash Tub Mail." Many of the women were selected by the tyrants of the tubs for their comeliness, and each had a lover in the couriers that went regularly

with mail and official instructions from one end of the Californias to the other. All important news was known first by these women, and much was discussed over the tubs that was long in reaching higher but no less interested circles; and domestic bulletins were as eagerly prized. The sailor that brought this information to Rezánov was a good-looking and susceptible youth, already the victim of an Indian maiden from the handsome tribe in the Santa Clara valley and sister of Doña Ignacia's Malia. Rezánov furnished him with beads and other trinkets, and was at no disadvantage thereafter.

There was nothing Rezánov would have liked better than to see a Russian fleet sail through the straits, but he also knew that nothing was less likely, and that from such rumors he should only derive further annoyance and delay. Two of his sailors deserted at the prospect of war, and his hosts, if neutral, were manifestly alert. Luis and Santiago had been obliged to go to Monterey for a few days, and there was no one at the Presidio in whom Rezánov could confide, either his impatience to see Concha or at the adjournment of his more prosaic but no less pressing interests. These two young men had been with him

almost constantly since his arrival, and demonstrated their friendship and even affection unfailingly; but there was no love lost between himself and Gervasio. This young hidalgo had the hauteur and intense family pride of Santiago without his younger brother's frank intelligence and lingering ingenuousness. With all the superiority of inferiority, he had made himself so unpopular that his real kindness of heart atoned for his absurdities only with those that knew him best. Rezánov was not of these nor aspired to be. Like all highly seasoned men of the world, he had no patience with the small vanities of the provincial, and although diplomatically courteous to all, in his present precarious position, he had taken too little trouble to conciliate Gervasio to find him of use in the absence of his friends.

At the end of three days Rezánov had forgotten his cargo, and would have sent the *Juno* to the bottom for ten minutes alone with Concha. He had been on fire with love of her since the moment of his actual surrender, and he was determined to have her if there were no other resource but elopement. All his old and intense love of personal freedom had melted out of form in the crucible of his lover's imagination. That he should have

doubted for a moment that Concha was the woman for whom his soul had held itself aloof and unshackled was a matter for contemptuous wonder, and the pride he had taken in his keen and swift perceptive faculties suffered an eclipse. Mind and soul and body he was a lover, a union unknown before.

On the fourth morning, his patience at an end, he was about to leave the *Juno* to demand a formal interview with Don José when he saw Luis and Santiago dismount at the beach and enter the canoe always in waiting. A few moments later they had helped themselves to cigarettes from the gift of the Tsar and were assuring Rezánov of their partisanship and approval.

"We were somewhat taken aback at the first moment," Luis admitted. "But—well, we are both in love—Santiago no less than I, although I have had these six long years of waiting and am likely to have another. And we love Concha as few men love their sisters, for there is no one like her—is it not so, Rezánov? And we quite understand why she has chosen you, and why she stands firm, for we know the strength of her character. We would that you were a Catholic, but even so, we will not sit by and see her life ruined, and we

have called to assure you that we shall use all our influence, every adroit argument, to bring our parents to a more reasonable frame of mind. They have already risen above the first natural impulse of selfishness, and would consent to the inevitable separation were you only a Catholic. I have also talked with the Governor—we arrived at midnight—and he flew into a terrible temper—the poor man is already like a mad bull at bay—but if my father yielded, he would—on all points. This morning I shall ride over and talk with Father Abella, who, I fancy, needs only a little extra pressure—you may be sure Concha has not been idle—to yield; and for more reasons than one. I shall enlist Father Uria and Father de la Cueva as well. They also have great influence with my parents, and as they return to San José in two days to prepare for the visit of the most estimable Dr. Langsdorff, there is no time to lose. I shall go this morning. One more cigarito, señor, and when that treaty is drawn remember the conversion of your brother to Russian tobacco."

Rezánov thanked him so warmly, assured him with so convincing an emphasis that with his fate in such competent hands his mind was at peace,

that the ardent heart of the Californian exulted; Rezánov, with his splendid appearance, and typical of the highest civilizations of Europe, had descended upon his narrow sphere with the authority of a demi-god, and he not only thirsted to serve him, but to fasten him to California with the surest of human bonds.

As he dropped over the side of the ship, Rezánov's hand fell lightly on the shoulder of Santiago.

"I can wait no longer to see your sister," he whispered, mindful of the sterner responsibilities of the older brother. "Do you think you could——"

Santiago nodded. "While Luis is at the Mission I shall go to my cousin Juan Moraga's. You will dine with us at the Presidio, and I shall escort you back to the ship."

XIX

It was ten o'clock when Rezánov, who had supped on the *Juno,* met Santiago in a sandy valley half a mile from the Presidio and mounted the horse his young friend himself had saddled and brought. The long ride was a silent one. The youth was not talkative at any time, and Rezánov was conscious of little else save an overwhelming desire to see Concha again. One secret of his success in life was his gift of yielding to one energy at a time, oblivious at the moment to aught that might distract or enfeeble the will. To-night, as he rode toward the Mission on as romantic a quest as ever came the way of a lover, the diplomat, the anxious director of a great company, the representative of one of the mighty potentates of earth, were submerged, forgotten, in the thrilling anticipation of his hour with the woman for whom every fibre of his being yearned.

Nor ever was there more appropriate a setting for one of those inaugural chapters in mating, half appreciated at the time, that glimmer as a sort of morning twilight on mountain tops over the mild

undulations of matrimony. The moon rode without a masking cloud across the ambiguous night blue of the California sky, a blue that looks like the fire of strange elements, where the stars glow like silver coals, and out of whose depths intense shadows of blue and black fall; shadows in which all the under world seems to float and recombine, where houses are ghosts of ancient selves and men but the eidola of forgotten dust. To-night the little estate of Juan Moraga, the most isolated and eastern of the settlement, surrounded by its high white wall, looked as unreal and formless as the blue oval of water and black trees behind it, but Rezánov knew that it enfolded warm and palpitating womanhood and was steeped in the sweetness of Castilian roses.

The riders, who had taken a path far to the east of the Mission, dismounted and tied their horses among the willows, then, in their dark cloaks but a part of the shadows, stole toward the wall designed to impress hostile tribes rather than to resist an onslaught; at the first warning the settlement invariably fled to the church where walls were massive and windows high.

In three of Moraga's four walls was a grille, or wicket of slender iron bars, whence the open could

be swept with glass, or gun at a pinch; and for the grille looking eastward went Rezánov as swiftly as the uneven ground would permit. As Concha watched him gather form in the moonlight and saw him jerk his cloak off impatiently, she flung her soft body against the wall and shook the bars with her strong little hands. But when he faced her she was erect and smiling; in a sudden uprush of spirits, almost indifferent. She wore a white gown and a rose in her hair. A rose-bush as dense as an arbor spread its prickly arms between herself and the windows of the house.

"Good-evening," she whispered.

Rezánov gave the grille an angry shake. (Santiago had considerately retired.) "Come out," he said peremptorily, "or let me in."

"There is but one gate, señor, and that is directly in front of the house door, that stands open——"

"Then I shall get over the wall——"

"Madre de Dios! You would leave your fine clothes and more on the thorns. My cousin planted those roses not for ornament, but to let the blood of defiant lovers. Not one has come twice——"

"Do you think I came here to talk to you

through a grating? I am no serenading Spaniard."

His eyes were blazing. Adobe is not stone. Rezánov took the light bars in both hands and wrenched them out; then, as Concha, divided between laughter and a sudden timidity, would have retreated, he dexterously clasped her neck and drew her head through the embrasure. As Santiago, who had watched Rezánov from a distance with some curiosity, saw his sister's beautiful face emerge from the wall to disappear at once behind another rampart, he turned abruptly on his heel and could have wept as he thought of Pilar Ortego of Santa Barbara. But there was a hope that he would be a cadet of the Southern Company before the year was out, and his parents and hers were indulgent. Even as he sighed, his own impending happiness infused him with an almost patronizing sympathy for the twain with the wall between, and he concealed himself among the willows that they might feel to the full the blessed isolation of lovers. His Pilar presented him with twenty-two hostages, and he lived to enjoy an honorable and a prosperous career, but he never forgot that night and the part he had played in one of the poignant and happy hours of his sister's life.

Day and night a great silence reigned in the Mission valley, broken only by the hoot of the owl, the singing of birds, the flight of horses across the plain. Even the low huddle of Mission buildings and the few homes beyond looked an anomaly in that vast quiet valley asleep and unknown for so many centuries in the wide embrace of the hills. Its jewel oasis alone made it acceptable to the Spaniard, but to Rezánov the sandy desert, with its close companionable silences, its cool night air sweet with the light chaste fragrance of the roses, the simple, almost primitive, conditions environing the girl, possessed a power to stir the depths of his emotions as no artful reinforcement to passion had ever done. He forgot the wall. His ego melted in a sense of complete union and happiness. Even when they returned to earth and discussed the dubious future, he was conscious of an odd resignation, very alien in his nature, not only to the barrier but to all the strange conditions of his wooing. He had felt something of this before, although less definitely, and to-night he concluded that she had the gift of clothing the inevitable with the semblance and the sweetness of choice; and wondered how long it would be able to skirt the arid steppes of philosophy.

She told him that she had talked daily with Father Abella. "He will say nothing to admit he is weakening, but I feel sure he has realized not only that our marriage will be for the best interest of California, but that to forbid it would wreck my life; and from this responsibility he shrinks. I can see it in his kind, shrewd, perplexed eyes, in the hesitating inflections of his voice, to say nothing of the poor arguments he advances to mine. What of my father and mother?"

"They look troubled, almost ill, but nothing could exceed their kindness to me, although they have pointedly given me no opportunity to introduce the subject of our marriage again. The Governor makes no sign that he knows of any aspiration of mine above corn, but he informed me to-day that California is doomed to abandonment, that the Indians are hopeless, that Spain will withdraw troops before she will send others, and that the country will either revert to savagery or fall a prey to the first enterprising outsider. As he was in comparison cheerful before, I fancy he apprehends the irresistible appeal of your father's surrender."

Concha nodded. "If my father yields he will see that you have everything else that you wish.

He may have advocated meeting your wishes in other respects in order to leave you without excuse to linger, but that argument is not strong enough for the Governor, whereas if he made up his mind to accept you as a son he would throw the whole force of his character and will into the scale; and when he reaches that pitch he wins—with men. I must, must bring you good fortune," she added anxiously. "Marriage with a little California girl—are you sure it will not ruin your career?"

"I can think of nothing that would advantage it more. What are you going to call me?"

"I cannot say Petrovich or Nicolaï—my Spanish tongue rebels. I shall call you Pédro. That is a very pretty name with us."

"My own harsh names suit my battered self rather better, but the more Californian you are and remain the happier I shall be. When am I to see your ears? Are they deformed, pointed and furry like a fawn's? Do they stand out? Were all the women of California tattooed in some Indian raid——"

Concha glanced about apprehensively, but not even Santiago was there to see the dreadful deed. With a defiant sweep of her hands she lifted both loops of hair, and two little ears, rosy even in the

moonlight, commanded amends and more from penitent lips.

"No man has ever seen them before—since I was a baby; not even my father and brothers," said Concha, trembling between horror and rapture at the tremendous surrender. "You will never remind me of it. Ay yi! promise—Pédro mio!"

"On condition that you promise not to confess it. I should like to be sure that your mind belonged as much to me and as little to others as possible. I do not object to confession—we have it in our church; but remember that there are other things as sacred as your religion."

She nodded. "I understand—better than you understand Romanism. I must confess that I met you to-night, but Father Abella is too discreet to ask for more. It is such blessed memories that feed the soul, and they would fly away on a whisper."

XX

The next morning Father Abella rode over to the Presidio and was closeted for an hour with the Comandante and the Governor. Then the three rode down to the beach, entered a canoe, and paddled out to the *Juno*. Rezánov met them on deck with a gravity as significant as their own, but led them at once to the cabin where wine, and the cigarettes for which alone they would have counselled the treaty, awaited them.

The quartette pledged each other in an embarrassed silence, disposed of a moment more with obdurate matches. Don José inhaled audibly, then lifted his eyes and met the veiled and steady gaze of the Russian.

"Señor," he said, "I have come to tell you that I consent to your marriage with my daughter."

"Thank you," said Rezánov. And their hands clasped across the table.

But this was far too simple for the taste of a Governor. So important an occasion demanded official dignity and many words.

"Your excellency," he said severely, sitting very erect, with one white hand on the table and the other on the hilt of his sword (yet full of courtesy and longing to enjoy the cheer and conversation of his host); "the peaceful monotony of our lives has been rudely shaken by a demand upon three fallible human beings to alter the course of history in two great nations. That is a sufficient excuse for the suspense to which we have been forced to subject you. The marriage of a Russian and a Spaniard is of no great moment in itself, but the marriage of the Plenipotentiary of the Tsar himself with the daughter of José Dario Argüello, not only one of the most eminent, respected, and distinguished of His Most Catholic Majesty's subjects in New Spain, but a man so beloved and influential that he could create a revolution were he so minded—indeed José, no one knows better than I how incapable you are of treason"—as the Comandante gave a loud exclamation of horror—"I merely illustrate and emphasize. My sands are nearly run, Excellency; it is to the estimable mind and strong paternal hand of my friend that this miserable colony must look before long, would she continue even this hand to mouth existence—a fact well

known to our king and natural lord. When he hears of this projected alliance——"

"Projected?" exclaimed Rezánov. "I wish to marry at once."

Father Abella shook his head vigorously, but he spoke with great kindness. "That, Excellency, alas, is the one point upon which we are forced to disappoint you. Indeed, our own submission to your wishes is contingent. This marriage cannot take place without a dispensation from Rome and the consent of the King."

Rezánov looked at Don José. "You too?" he asked curtly.

The Comandante stirred uneasily, heaved a deep sigh; he thought of the long impatience of his Concha. "It is true," he said. "Not only would it be impossible for my conscience to resign itself to the marriage of my daughter with a heretic—pardon, Excellency—without the blessing of the Pope; not only would no priest in California perform the ceremony until it arrived, but it would mean the degradation of Governor Arrillaga and myself, and the ruin of all your other hopes. We should be ordered summarily to Mexico, perhaps worse, and no Russian would ever be permitted to set foot in the Californias

again. I would it were otherwise. I know—I know—but it is inevitable. Your excellency must see it. Even were you a Catholic, Governor Arrillaga and the President of the Missions, at least, would not dare to countenance this marriage without the consent of the King."

Rezánov was silent for a few minutes. In spite of the emotions of the past few days he was astonished at the depth and keenness of his disappointment. But never yet had he failed to realize when he was beaten, nor to trim his sails without loss of precious time.

"Very well," he said. "I will go to St. Petersburg at the earliest possible moment, obtain personal letters from the Tsar and proceed post haste to Rome and Madrid. At the same time I shall arrange for the treaty with full authority from the Tsar. Then I shall sail from Spain to Mexico and reach here as soon as may be. It will take a long while, the best part of two years; but I have your word——"

"You have," the three asserted with solemn emphasis.

"Very well. But there is one thing more. I am not in a diplomatic humor. My Sitkans are starving. I must leave here with a ship-load of breadstuffs."

Again the Governor drew up his slim soldierly figure; deposited his cigarette on the malachite ash tray. "You may be sure that we have given that momentous question our deepest consideration. Father Abella's suggestion that we buy your commodities for cash, and that with our Spanish dollars you buy again of us, did not strike me favorably at first, for it savored of sophistry. I may have failed in every attempt to benefit and advance this God-forsaken country, but at least I have been the honest agent of my King. But the circumstances are extraordinary. You are about to become one of us, to do our unhappy colony the greatest service that is in the power of any mortal, and personally you have inspired us with affection and respect. I have therefore decided that the exchange shall be made on these terms, but that your cargo shall be received by Don José Argüello, Comandante of the San Francisco Company, and held in trust until the formal consent of the King to the purchase shall arrive."

Rezánov glowed to his finger tips. Not even the assurance of his union with the woman of his heart, which after all had met but the skeleton of his desires, gave him the acute satisfaction of

this sudden fulfilment of his self-imposed mission. He dropped his own official demeanor and throwing himself across the table gripped the Governor's hand while he poured out his thanks in a voice thick with feeling, his eyes glittering with more than victory. He did not lose sight of his ultimate designs and pledge himself to eternal friendship, but he unwittingly conveyed the impression that Spain had that day made a friend she could ill afford to lose; and his three visitors rose well pleased with the culmination of the interview.

"You must stay here no longer, Rezánov," said Don José, as they were taking leave. "My house is now literally your own. It will be some weeks before the large quantities of corn and flour and other stores you wish can be got together—for we must lay a requisition on the fertile Mission ranchos in the valleys—and you will exchange these narrow quarters for such poor comfort as my house affords—I take no denial. Concha will remain at Juan Moraga's for the present."

XXI

Concha, after her father left her, sat for a long while in an attitude of such complete repose that Sturgis, watching her miserably from the veranda, remembered the consolations of his sketch book; and he was able to counterfeit the graceful proud figure, under the wall and the roses, before she stirred.

Concha had sent her father away deeply puzzled. When, after embracing her with unusual emotion, he had informed her of his consent to her marriage, she had received the news as a matter of course, her hopes and desires having mounted too high to contemplate a fall. Then the Comandante, after dwelling at some length upon his discussions with the Governor and the priests, and admonishing her against conceiving herself too important a factor in what might prove to be an alliance of international moment (she had laughed merrily and called him the most callous of parents and subtlest of diplomats), had announced with some trepidation and his most official manner that the consent of the Pope

and the King would be sought by Rezánov in person, involving a delay and separation of not less than two years. But to his surprise she did not fling herself upon his neck with blandishments and tears. She merely became quite still, her light high spirits retreating as a breeze might before one of Nature's sudden and portentous calms. Don José, after a fruitless attempt to recapture her interest, mounted his horse and rode away; and Concha sat down on a bench under the wall and thought for an hour without moving a finger.

Her first sensation was one of bitter anger and disappointment with Rezánov. He had, apparently, in the first brief interview with their tribunal, given his consent to this long delay of their nuptials.

Her thoughts since his advent had flown on many journeys and known little rest. She had been rudely awakened and stripped of her girlish illusions in those days and nights of battle between pride and her dazzled womanhood; when, in the humility of new love, she believed herself to be but one of a hundred pretty girls in the eyes of this accomplished and fortunate Russian. The interval had been brief, but long enough for the grandeur in her nature to awaken almost concur-

rently with her passions, and she had planned a life, in which, guided and uplifted by the star of fidelity, and delivered from the frivolous and commonplace temptations of other women, she should devote herself to the improvement and instruction not only of the Indians but of the youth of her own class. The schools founded by the estimable and enterprising Borica had practically disappeared, and she was by far the best educated woman in California. For such there was a manifest career and an inexorable duty. She would live to be old, she supposed, like all the Argüellos and Moragas; but hidden in her unspotted soul would be the flame of eternal youth, fed by an ideal and a memory that would outlive her weary insignificant body. And in it she would find her courage and her inspiration as well as an unwasting sympathy for those she taught.

Then had come the sudden and passionate wooing of Rezánov. All other ideals and aspirations had fled. She had alternated between the tragic extremes of bliss and despair. So completely did the ardor of her nature respond to his, so fierce and primitive was the cry of her ego for its mate, that she cared nothing for the distress of her parents nor the fate of California. There is no

love complete without this early and absolute selfishness, which is merely the furious determination of the race to accomplish its object before the spirit awakens and the passions cool.

Last night life had seemed less serious; she had been girlishly, romantically happy. It is true that her heart had thumped against the wall as he kissed her, and that she had been full of a wild desire to sing, although she could hardly shape and utter the words that danced in her throbbing brain. But she had been conscious through it all of the romantic circumstance, of the lonely beauty of the night, of the delightful wickedness of meeting her lover in the silence and the dark, even with a wall ten feet high between them. For the wall, indeed, she had been confusedly and deliciously grateful.

And this was what a man's love came to: ardors by night and expedience by day! Or was it merely that Rezánov was the man of affairs always, the lover incidentally? But how could a man who had seemed the very epitome of all the lovers of all the world but a few hours before, contemplate, far less accept, a separation of years? Poor Concha groped toward the great unacceptable fact of life the whole, lit by love its chief incident;

and had a fleeting vision of the waste lands in the lives of women occupied only with matrimony. But she dropped her lashes upon this unalluring vision, and as she did so, inevitably she began to excuse the man.

None knew better than she every side of the great question that was shaking not only her life but California itself. Appeal from the dictum of state and clergy would be a mere waste of time. The only alternative was flight. That would mean the wreck of Rezánov's avowed purposes in coming to this quarter of New Spain, and perhaps of others she dimly suspected. It would mean the very acme of misery for his Sitkans, and an indefensible blow to the Company. It might even prove the fatal mistake in his career, for which his enemies were ever on the alert. He was not communicative about himself except when he had an object in view, but he had told her something of his life, and his officers and Langsdorff had told more. He was no silly caballero warbling and thrumming at her grating when she longed for sleep, but a man in his forties whose passions were in the leash of a remarkably acute and ambitious brain. She even thrilled with pride in his strength, for she knew how he loved her; and al-

though his part was action, her stimulated instincts taught her that she would rarely be long from his mind. And what was she to seek to roll stumbling blocks into the career of a man like that? In this very garden, for four long days, she had dreamed exalted dreams of the manifold gifts she should develop both for his solace at home and his worldly advancement. She had once felt all a girl's impatience when her mother's tears made her father's departure on some distant mission more difficult than need be, and although she knew now that her capacity for tenderness was as great, she resolved to mould herself in a larger shape than that.

But she sighed and drooped a little. The burden of woman's waiting seemed already to have descended upon her. Two years were long—long. There might be other delays. He might fall ill; he had been ill before in that barbarous Russian north. And in all that time it was doubtful if she received a line from him, a hint of his welfare. The Boston and British skippers came no more, and it was certain that no Russian ship would visit California again until the treaty was signed and official news of it had made its slow way to these uttermost shores. She had resented,

in her young ambition and indocility, the chance that had stranded her, equipped for civilization, on this rim of the world, but never so much as in that moment, when she sat with arrested breath and realized to the full the primitive conditions of a country thousands of miles from the very outposts of Europe, and with never the sight of a letter that did not come from Spain or one of her colonies.

"Would that we lived a generation later," she thought with a heavy sigh. "Progress is almost automatic, and to a land as fertile and desirable as this the stream must turn in due course. But not in my time. Not in my time."

She rose and leaned her elbows in the embrasure of the grille, where Santiago had restored the bars, and looked out over the fields of grain planted by the padres, the immense sand dunes beyond, that shut the lovely bay from sight; the hills embracing the primitive scene in a frowning arc. With all her imagination it was long before she could picture a great city covering that immense and almost desert space. A pueblo in time, perhaps, for Rezánov had awakened her mind to the importance of the harbor as a port of call. Many more adobe homes where the sand was not hot and shifting, a few ships in the bay when Spain

had been compelled to relax her jealous vigilance —or—who knew?—perhaps!—a flourishing colony when the Russian bear had devoured the Spanish lion. She knew something and suspected more of the rottenness and inefficiency of Spain, and, were Russia a nation of Rezánovs, what opposition in California against the tide thundering down from the north? Then, perhaps, the city that had travelled from the brain of the Russian to hers when the fog had rolled over the heights; the towers and palaces and bazaars, the thousand little golden domes with the slender cross atop; the forts on the crags and the villas in the hollows, and on all the islands and hills. But when she and her lover were dust. When she and her lover were dust.

But she was too young and too ardent to listen long to the ravens of the spirit. Two years are not eternity, and in happiness the past rolls together like a scroll and is naught. She fell to dreaming. Her lips that had been set with the gravity of stone relaxed in warm curves. The color came back to her cheek, the light to her eyes. She was a girl at her grating with the roses poignant above her, and the world, radiant, alluring, and all for her, swimming in the violet haze beyond.

XXII

Rezánov in those days was literally lord and master at the Presidio. If he did not burn the house of his devoted host he ran it to suit himself. He turned one of its rooms into an office, where he received the envoys from the different Missions and examined the samples of everything submitted to him, trusting little to his commissary. His leisure he employed scouring the country or shooting deer and quail in the company of his younger hosts. The literal mind of Don José accepted him as an actual son and embryonic Californian, and, his conscience at peace, revelled in his society as a sign from propitiated heaven; rejoicing in the virtue of his years. The Governor, testily remarking that as California was so well governed for the present he would retire to Monterey and take a siesta, rode off one morning, but not without an affectionate: "God preserve the life of your excellency many years."

But although Rezánov saw the most sanguine hopes that had brought him to California fulfilled, and although he looked from the mountain ridges

of the east over the great low valleys watered by rivers and shaded by oaks, where enough grain could be raised to keep the blood red in a thousand times the colonial population of Russia, although he felt himself in more and more abundant health, more and more in love with life, it is not to be supposed for a moment that he was satisfied. Concha he barely saw. She remained with the Moragas, and although she came occasionally to the afternoon dances at the Presidio, and he had dined once at her cousin's house, where the formal betrothal had taken place and the marriage contract had been signed in the presence of her family and more intimate friends, the priests, his officers, and the Governor, he had not spoken with her for a moment alone. Nor had her eyes met his in a glance of understanding. At the dances she showed him no favor; and as the engagement was to be as secret as might be in that small community, until his return with consent of Pope and King, he was forced to concede that her conduct was irreproachable; but when on the day of the betrothal she was oblivious to his efforts to draw her into the garden, he mounted his horse and rode off in a huff.

The truth was that Concha liked the present

arrangement no better than himself, and knowing that her own appeal against the proprieties would result in a deeper seclusion, she determined to goad him into using every resource of address and subtlety to bring about a more human state of affairs. And she accomplished her object. Rezánov, at the end of a week, was not only infuriated but alarmed. He knew the imagination of woman, and guessed that Concha, in her brooding solitude, distorted all that was unfortunate in the present and dwelt morbidly on the future. He knew that she must resent his part in the long separation, no doubt his lack of impulsiveness in not proposing elopement. There was a priest in his company who, although he ate below the salt and found his associates among the sailors, could have performed the ceremony of marriage when the *Juno*, under full sail in the night, was scudding for the Russian north. It is not to be denied that this romantic alternative appealed to Rezánov, and had it not been for the starving wretches so eagerly awaiting his coming he might have been tempted to throw commercial relations to the winds and flee with his bride while San Francisco, secure in the knowledge of the *Juno's* empty hold, was in its first heavy sleep. It is

doubtful if he would have advanced beyond impulse, for Rezánov was not the man to lose sight of a purpose to which he had set the full strength of his talents, and life had tempered his impetuous nature with much philosophy. Moreover, while his conscience might ignore the double dealing necessary to the accomplishment of patriotic or political acts, it revolted at the idea of outwitting, possibly wrecking, his trusting and hospitable host. But the mere fact that his imagination could dwell upon such an issue as reckless flight, inflamed his impatience, and his desire to see Concha daily during these last few weeks of propinquity. Finally he sought the coöperation of Father Abella, and that wise student of maids and men gave him cheer.

On Thursday afternoon there was to take place the long delayed Indian dance and bull-bear fight; not in the Presidio, but at the Mission, the pride of the friars inciting them to succeed where the military authorities had failed. All the little world of San Francisco would be there, and it would be strange if in the confusion between performance and supper a lover could not find a moment alone with his lady.

The elements were kind to the padres. The

afternoon was not too hot, although the sun flooded the plain and there was not a cloud on the dazzling blue of the sky. Never had the Mission and the mansions looked so white, their tiles so red. The trees were blossoming pink and white in the orchards, the lightest breeze rippled the green of the fields; and into this valley came neither the winds nor the fogs of the ocean.

The priests and their guests of honor sat on the long corridor beside the church; the soldiers, sailors and Indians of Presidio and Mission forming the other three sides of a hollow square. The Indian women were a blaze of color. The ladies on the corridor wore their mantillas, jewels, and the gayest of artificial flowers. There were as many fans as women. Rezánov sat between Father Abella and the Comandante, and not being in the best of tempers had never looked more imposing and remote. Concha, leaning against one of the pillars, stole a glance at him and wondered miserably if this haughty European had really sought her hand, if it were not a girl's foolish dream. But Concha's humble moments at this period of her life were rare, and she drew herself up proudly, the blood of the proudest race in Europe shaking angrily in her veins.

A moment later, in response to a power greater than any within herself, she turned again. The attention of hosts and guests was riveted upon the preliminary antics of the Indian dancers, and Rezánov seized the opportunity to lean forward unobserved and gaze at the girl whom it seemed to him he saw for the first time in the full splendor of her beauty. She wore a large mantilla of white Spanish lace. In the fashion of the day it rose at the back almost from the hem of her gown to descend in a point over the high comb to her eyes. The two points of the width were gathered at her breast, defining the outlines of her superb figure, and fastened with one large Castilian rose surrounded by its mass of tiny sharp buds and dull green leaves. As the familiar scent assailed Rezánov's nostrils they tingled and expanded. His lids were lifted and his eyes glowing as he finally compelled her glance, and her own eyes opened with an eager flash; her lips parted and her shoulders lost their haughty poise. For a moment their gaze lingered in a perfect understanding; his ill-humor vanished, and he leaned back with a complimentary remark as Father Abella directed his attention to the most agile of the Indians.

The swart natives of both sexes with their thick

features and long hair were even more hideous than usual in bandeaux of bright feathers, scant garments made from the breasts of water-fowls, rattling strings of shells, and tattooing on arm and leg no longer concealed by the decorous Mission smock. Rezánov had that day sent them presents of glass beads and ribbons, and in these they took such extravagant pride that for some time their dancing was almost automatic.

But soon their blood warmed, and after the first dance, which was merely a series of measured springs on the part of the men and a beating of time by the women, a large straw figure symbolizing an entire hostile tribe was brought in, and about this pranced the men with savage cries and gestures, advancing, attacking, retreating, finally piercing it with their arrows and marching it off with sharp yells of triumph that reverberated among the hills; the women never varying from a loud monotonous chant.

There was a peaceful interlude, during which the men, holding bow and arrow aloft, hopped up and down on one spot, the women hopping beside them and snapping thumb and forefinger on the body, still singing in the same high measured voice. But while they danced a great bonfire was

laid and kindled. The gyrations lasted a few moments longer, then the chief seized a live ember and swallowed it. His example was immediately followed by his tribe, and, whether to relieve discomfort or with energies but quickened, they executed a series of incredible handsprings and acrobatic capers. When they finally whirled away on toes and finger tips, another chief, in the horns and hide of a deer, rushed in, pursued by a party of hunters. For several moments he perfectly simulated a hunted animal, lurking and dodging in high grass, behind trees, venturing to the brink of a stream to drink, searching eagerly for his mate; and when he finally escaped it was amidst the most enthusiastic plaudits as yet evoked.

After an hour of this varied performance, the square was enlarged by several mounted vaqueros galloping about with warning cries and much flourishing of lasso. They were the cattle herders of the Mission ranch just over the hills, and were in gala attire of black glazed sombrero with silver cord, white shirt open at the throat, short black velvet trousers laced with silver, red sash and high yellow boots. Four, pistol in hand, stationed themselves in front of the corridor, while the others rode out and in again, dragging a bear

and a bull, with hind legs attached by two yards of rope. The captors left the captives in the middle of the square, and without more ado the serious sport of the day began. The bull, with stomach empty and hide inflamed, rushed at the bear, furious from captivity, with such a roar that the Indian women screamed and even the men shuffled their feet uneasily. But neither combatant was interested in aught but the other. The one sought to gore, his enemy to strike or hug. The vaqueros teased them with arrows and cries, the dust flew; for a few moments there was but a heaving, panting, lashing bulk in the middle of the arena, and then the bull, his tongue torn out, rolled on his back, and another was driven in before the victor could wreak his unsated vengeance among the spectators. The bear, dragging the dead bull, rushed at the living, who, unmartial at first, stiffened to the defensive as he saw a bulk of wiry fur set with eyes of fire, almost upon him. He sprang aside, lowered his horns, and caught the bear in the chest. But the victor was a compact mass of battle and momentum. His onslaught flung the bear over backward, and quickly disengaging himself he made another leap at his equally agile enemy. This time the

battle was longer and more various, for the bull was smaller, more active and dexterous. Twice he almost had the bear on his horns, but was rolled, only saving his neck and back from the fury of the mountain beast by such a kicking and leaping that both combatants were indistinguishable from the whirlwind of dust. Out of this they would emerge to stand panting in front of each other with tongues pendant and red eyes rolling. Finally the bear, nearly exhausted, made a sudden charge, the bull leaped aside, back again with incredible swiftness, caught the bear in the belly, tossed him so high that he met the hard earth with a loud cracking of bone. The vaqueros circled about the maddened bull, set his hide thick with arrows, tripped him with the lasso. A wiry little Mexican in yellow, galloping in on his mustang, administered the coup de grace amidst the wild applause of the spectators, whose shouting and clapping and stamping might have been heard by the envious guard at the Presidio and Yerba Buena.

As the party on the corridor broke, Rezánov found no difficulty in reaching Concha's side, for even Doña Ignacia was chattering wildly with several other good dames who renewed their youth briefly at the bull-fight.

"Did you enjoy that?" he asked curiously.

"I did not look at it. I never do. But I know that you were not affronted. You never took your eyes from those dreadful beasts."

"I am exhilarated to know that you watched me. Yes, at a bull-fight the primitive man in me has its way, although I have the grace to be ashamed of myself afterward. In that I am at least one degree more civilized than your race, which never repents."

The door of one of the smaller rooms stood open, and as they took advantage of this oversight with a singular concert of motive, he took both her hands in his. "Are you angry with me?" he asked softly. He dared not close the door, but his back was square against it, and the other guests were moving down to the refectory.

"For liking such horrid sport?"

"We have no time to waste in coquetry."

Her eyes melted, but she could not resist planting a dart. "Not now—I quite understand: love could never be first with you. And two years are not so long. They quickly pass when one is busy. I shall find occupation, and you will have no time for longings and regrets."

They were not yet alone, women were talking

in their light high voices not a yard away. The hindrance and her new loveliness in the soft mantilla, the pink of the roses reflected in her throat, the provocative curl of her mouth, sent the blood to his head.

"You have only to say the word," he said hoarsely, "and the *Juno* will sail to-night."

Never before had she seen his face so unmasked. Her voice shook in triumph and response.

"Would you? Would you?"

"Say the word!"

"You would sacrifice all—the Company—your career—your Sitkans?"

"All—everything." His own voice shook with more than passion, for even in that moment he counted the cost, but he did not care.

But Concha detected that second break in his voice, and turned her head sadly.

"You would not say that to-morrow. I hate myself that I made you say it now. I love you enough to wait forever, but I have not the courage to hand you over to your enemies."

"You are strangely far-sighted for a young girl." And between admiration and pique, his ardor suffered a chill.

"I am no longer a young girl. In these last

days it has seemed to me that secrets locked in my brain, secrets of women long dead, but of whose essence I am, have come forth to the light. I have suffered in anticipation. My mind has flown—flown—I have lived those two years until they are twenty, thirty, and I have lived on into old age here by the sea, watching, watching——''

She had dropped all pretence of coquetry and was speaking with a passionate forlornness. But before he could interrupt her, take advantage of the retreating voices that left them alone at last, she had drawn herself up and moved a step away. "Do not think, however," she said proudly, "that I am really as weak and silly as that. It was only a mood. Should you not return I should grieve, yes; and should I live as long as is common with my race, still would my heart remain young with your image, and with the fidelity that would be no less a religion than that of my church. But I should not live a selfish life, or I should be unworthy of my election to experience a great and eternal passion. Memory and the life of the imagination would be my solace, possibly in time my happiness, but my days I should give to this poor little world of ours; and all that one mortal, and that a woman, has to bestow upon a

stranded and benighted people. It may not be much, but I make you that promise, señor, that you will not think me a foolish romantic girl unworthy of the great responsibilities you have offered me."

"Concha!" He was deeply moved, and at the same time her words chilled him with subtle prophecy, sank into some unexplored depth of his consciousness, meeting response as subtle, filling him with a rush of angry impatience at the mortality of man. He glanced over his shoulder, then took her recklessly in his arms.

"Is it possible you doubt I will come back?" he demanded. "My faith?"

"No, not that. But such happiness seems to me too great for this life."

He remembered how often he had been close to death; he knew that during the greater part of the next two years he should see the glimmer of the scythe oftener yet. For a moment it seemed to him that he felt the dark waters rise in his soul, heard the jeers of the gods at the vanity of mortal will. But the blood ran strong and warm in his veins. He shook off the obsession, and smiled a little cynically, even as he kissed her.

"This is the hour for romance, my dear. In

the years to come, when you are very prosaically my wife with a thousand duties, and grumbling at my exactions, your consolation will be the memory of some moment like this, when you were able to feel romantic and sad. I wish I could arrange for some such set of memories for myself, but I am unequal to your divine melancholy. When I cannot see you I am cross and sulky; and just now—I am, well—philosophically happy. Some day I shall be happier, but this is well enough. And I can harbor no ugly presentiments. As I entered California I was elated with a sense of coming happiness, of future victories; and I prefer to dwell upon that, the more particularly as in a measure the prophetic hint has been fulfilled. So make the most of the present. I shall see you daily during this last precious fortnight, for I am determined this arrangement shall cease; and you must exorcise coquetry and abet me whenever there is a chance of a word alone."

She nodded, but she noted with a sigh that he said no more of sudden flight. She would never have consented to jeopardize the least of his interests, but she fain would have been besought. The experience she had had of the vehemence and fire in Rezánov made her long for his complete

subjugation and the happiness it must bring to herself. But as he smiled tenderly above her she saw that his practical brain had silenced the irresponsible demands of love, and although she did not withdraw from his arm she stiffened her head.

"I fancy I shall return home to-morrow," she said. "My mother tells me that she can live without me no longer, and that Father Abella has reminded her that if I stay in the house of Elena Castro I shall be as free from gossip as here. I infer that he has rated my two parents for making a martyr of me unnecessarily, and told them it was a duty to enliven my life as much as possible before I enter upon this long period of probation. The grating of my room at Elena's is above a little strip of garden, and faces the blank wall of the next house. Sometimes—who knows?" She shrugged her shoulders and gave a gay little laugh, then stood very erect and moved past him to the door. She had recognized the shuffling step of Father Abella.

"Is supper ready, padre mio?" she asked sweetly. "His excellency and I have talked so much that we are very hungry."

"There is no need to deceive me," said Father Abella dryly. "You are not the first lovers I have

known, although I will admit you are by far the most interesting, and for that reason I have had the wickedness to abet you. But I fancy the good God will forgive me. Come quickly. They are scattered now, but will go to the refectory in a moment and miss you. Excellency, will you give your arm to Doña Ignacia and take the seat at the head of the table? Concha, my child, I am afraid you must console our good Don William. He is having a wretched quarter of an hour but has loyally diverted the attention of your mother."

"That is the vocation of certain men," said Concha lightly.

XXIII

Life was very gay for a fortnight. An hour after the Comandante's surrender he had despatched invitations to all the young folk of the Gente de Razon of Monterey, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, and San Diego, and to such of the older as would brave the long journeys. The Montereños had arrived for the Mission entertainment, and during the next few days the rest poured over the hills: De la Guerras, Ximénos, Estudillos, Carrillos, Esténegas, Morénos, Cotas, Estradas, Picos, Pachécos, Lugos, Ortégas, Alvarados, Bandinis, Peraltas, members of the Luis, Rodriguez, Lopez families all of gentle blood, that made up the society of Old California; as gay, arcadian, irresponsible, yet moral a society as ever fluttered over this planet. Every house in the Presidio and valley, every spare room at the Mission, opened to them with the exuberant hospitality of the country. The caballeros had their finest wardrobes of colored silks and embroidered botas, sombreros laden with silver, fine lawn and lace, jewel and

sash, velvet serape for the chill of the late afternoon. The matrons brought their stiff robes of red and yellow satin, the girls as many flowered silks and lawns, mantillas and rebosos, as the family carretas would hold. The square of the Presidio was crowded from morning until midnight with the spirited horses of the country, prancing impatiently under the heavy Mexican saddle, heavier with silver, made a trifle more endurable by the blanket of velvet or cloth. No Californian walked a dozen rods when he had a horse to carry him.

But the horses were not always champing in the square. There was more than one bull-bear fight, and twice a week at least they carried their owners to the hills of the Mission ranch, or the rocky cliffs and gorges above Yerba Buena, the Indian servants following with great baskets of luncheon, perhaps roasting an ox whole in a trench. This the Californians called barbecue and the picnic merienda.

There was dancing day and night, the tinkling of guitars, flirting of fans. Rezánov vowed he would not have believed there were so many fans and guitars in the world, and suddenly remembered he had never seen Concha with either.

The lady of his choice reigned supreme. Many had taken the long blistering journey for no other purpose than to see the famous beauty and her Russian; the engagement was as well known as if cried from the Mission top. The girls were surprised and delighted to find Concha sweet rather than proud and envied her with amiable enthusiasm. The caballeros, fewer in number, for most of the men in California at that period before a freer distribution of land were on duty in the army, artfully ignored the unavowed bond, but liked Rezánov when he took the trouble to charm them.

Khostov and Davidov watched the loading of the *Juno* with a lively regret. Never had they enjoyed themselves more, nor seen so many pretty girls in one place. Both had begun by falling in love with Concha, and although they rebounded swiftly from the blow to their hopes, it happily saved them from a more serious dilemma; unwealthed and graceless as they were, they would have been regarded with little favor by the practical Californian father. As it was, their pleasures were unpoisoned by regrets or rebuff. When they were not flirting in the dance or in front of a lattice, receiving a lesson in Span-

ish behind the portly back of a dueña, or clasping brown little fingers under cover of a fan when all eyes were riveted on the death struggle of a bull and a bear, they were playing cards and drinking in the officers' quarters; which they liked almost as well. It is true they sometimes paid the price in a cutting rebuke from their chief, but the rebukes were not as frequent as in less toward circumstances, and were generally followed by some fresh indulgence. This, they uneasily guessed, was not only the result of the equable state of his excellency's temper, but because he had a signal unpleasantness in store, and would not hazard their resignation. They had taken advantage of an imperial ukase to enter the service of the Russian-American Company temporarily, and they knew that if they evaded any behest of Rezánov's their adventurous life in the Pacific would be over. Therefore, although they resented his implacable will, they pulled with him in outward amity; and indeed there were few of the *Juno's* human freight that did not look back upon that California springtime as the episode of their lives, commonly stormy or monotonous, in which the golden tide flowed with least alloy. Even Langsdorff, although impervious to female

charms and with scientific thirst unslaked, enjoyed the Spanish fare and the society of the priests. The sailors received many privileges, attended bull-fights and fandangos, loved and pledged; and were only restrained from emigration to the interior of this enchanted land of pretty girls and plentiful food by the knowledge of the sure and merciless vengeance of their chief. Had the rumor of war still held it might have been otherwise, but that raven had flown off to the limbo of its kind, and the Comandante let it be known that deserters would be summarily captured and sent in irons to the *Juno*.

In the mind of Concha Argüello there was never a lingering doubt of the quality of that fortnight between the days of torturing doubts and acute emotional upheaval, and the sailing away of Rezánov. It was true that what he banteringly termed her romantic sadness possessed her at times, but it served as a shadow to throw into sharper relief an almost incredible happiness. If she seldom saw Rezánov alone there was the less to disturb her, and at least he was never far from her side. There were always the delight of unexpected moments unseen, whispered words in the crowd, the sense of complete understand-

ing, broken now and again by poignant attacks of unreasoning jealousy, not only on her part but his; quite worth the reconciliation at the lattice, while Elena Castro, gentle dueña, pitched her voice high and amused her husband so well he sought no opportunity for response.

Then there was more than one excursion about the bay on the *Juno,* dinner on La Bellissima or Nuestra Señora de los Angeles, a long return after sundown that the southerners might appreciate the glory of the sunsets, when the blue of the water was reflected in the lower sky, to melt into the pink fire above, and all the land swam in a pearly mist.

Once the Comandante took twenty of his guests, a gay cavalcade, to his rancho, El Pilar, thirty miles to the south: a long valley flanked by the bay and the eastern mountains on the one hand, and a high range dense with forests of tall thin trees on the other. But the valley itself was less Californian than any part of the country Rezánov had seen. Smooth and flat and free of undergrowth and set with at least ten thousand oaks, it looked more like a splendid English park, long preserved, than the recent haunt of naked savages. There were deer and quail in abundance,

here and there an open field of grain. Long beards of pale green moss waved from the white oaks, wild flowers, golden red and pale blue, burst underfoot. There were hedges of sweet brier, acres of lupins, purple and yellow. Altogether the ideal estate of a nobleman; and Rezánov, who had liked nothing in California so well, gave his imagination rein and saw the counterpart of the castle of his ancestors rise in the deep shade of the trees.

Don José's house was a long rambling adobe, red tiled, with many bedrooms and one immense hall. Beyond was a chapel and a dozen out-buildings. Dinner was served in patriarchal style in the hall, the Comandante—or El Padrone as he was known here—and his guests at the upper end of the table; below the salt, the vaqueros, their wives and children, and the humble friar who drove them to prayer night and morning. The friar wore his brown robes, the vaqueros their black and silver and red in honor of the company, their women glaring handkerchiefs of green or red or yellow about their necks, even pinned back and front on their shapeless garments; and affording a fine vegetable garden contrast to the delicate flower bed surrounding the padrone.

There was a race track on the ranch and many

fine horses. After siesta the company mounted fresh steeds and rode off to applaud the feats of the vaqueros, who not content with climbing the greased pole, wrenching the head of an unfortunate rooster from his buried body as they galloped by, submitting the tail of an oiled pig in full flight to the same indignity, gave when these and other native diversions were exhausted, such exhibitions of riding and racing as have never been seen out of California. As lithe as willow wands, on slender horses as graceful as themselves, they looked like meteors springing through space, and there was no trick of the circus they did not know by instinct and translate from gymnastics into poetry. Even Rezánov shared the excitement of the shouting clapping Californians, and Concha laughed delightedly when his cap waved with the sombreros.

"I think you will make a good Californian in time," she said as they rode homeward.

"Perhaps," said Rezánov musingly. His eyes roved over the magnificent estate and at the moment they entered a portion of it that deepened to woods, so dense was the undergrowth, so thick the oak trees. Here there was but a glimpse, now and again, of the mountains swimming in the dark

blue mist of the late afternoon, the moss waved thickly from the ancient trees; over even the higher branches of many rolled a cascade of small brittle leaves, with the tempting opulence of its poisonous sap. The path was very abrupt, cut where the immense spreading trees permitted, and Rezánov and Concha had no difficulty in falling away from the chattering excited company.

"Tell me your ultimate plans, Pédro mio," said Concha softly. "You are dreaming of something this moment beyond corn and treaties."

"Do you want that final proof?" he asked, smiling. "Well, if I could not trust you that would be the end of everything, and I know that I can. I have long regarded California as an absolutely necessary field of supplies, and since I have come here I will frankly say that could I, as the representative of the Tsar in all this part of the world, make it practically my own, I should be content in even a permanent exile from St. Petersburg. I could attract an immense colony here and in time import libraries and works of art, laying the foundation of a great and important city on that fine site about Yerba Buena. But now that these kind people have practically adopted me I cannot repay their hospitality by

any overt act of hostility. I must be content either slowly to absorb the country, in which case I shall see no great result in my lifetime, or—and for this I hope—what with the mess Bonaparte is making of Europe every state may be at the others' throat before long, including Russia and Spain. At all events, a cause for rupture would not be far to seek, and it would need no instigation of mine to despatch a fleet to these shores. In that case I should be sent with it to take possession in the name of the Tsar, and to deal with these simple, kind—and inefficient people, my dear girl—as no other Russian could. They cannot hold this country. Spain could not—would not, at all events, for she has not troops enough here to protect a territory half its size—hold it against even the 'Americans,' should they in time feel strong enough to push their way across the western wilderness. It is the destiny of this charming Arcadia to disappear; and did Russia forego an opportunity to appropriate a domain that offers her literally everything except civilization, she would be unworthy of her place among nations. Moreover—a beneficent triumph impossible to us otherwise—with a powerful and flourishing colony up and down this coast, and

sending breadstuffs regularly to our other possessions in these waters until the natives, immigrants, and exiles were healthy vitalized beings, it would be but a question of a few years before we should force open the doors of China and Japan." He caught Concha from her horse and strained her to him in the mounting ardor of his plunge down the future. "You must resent nothing!" he cried. "You must cease to be a Spanish woman when you become my wife, and help me as only you can in those inevitable years I have mapped out; and not so much for myself as for Russia. My enemies have sought to persuade three sovereigns that I am a visionary, but I have already accomplished much that met with resentment and ridicule when I broached it. And I know my powers! I tingle with the knowledge of my ability to carry to a conclusion every plan I have thought worth the holding when the ardor of conception was over. I swear to you that death alone —and I believe that nothing is further aloof— shall prevent my giving this country to Russia before five years have passed, and within another brief span the trade of China and Japan. It is a glorious destiny for a man, one man—to pass into history as the Russian of his century that

has done most to add to the extent and the wealth and the power of his empire! Does that sound vainglorious, and do you resent it? You must not, I tell you, you must not!"

Concha had never seen him in such a mood. Although he held her so closely that the horses were angrily biting each other, she felt that for once there was nothing personal in his ardor. His eyes were blazing, but they stared as if a great and prophetic panorama had risen in this silent wood, where the long faded moss hung as motionless as if by those quiet waters that even the most ardent must cross in his time. She felt his heart beat as she had felt it before against her soft breast, but she knew that if he thought of her at all it was but as a part of himself, not as the woman he impatiently desired. But she was sensible of no resentment, either for herself or her race, which, indeed, she knew to be but a wayfarer in the wilderness engaged in a brief chimerical enterprise. For the first time she felt her individuality melt into, commingle with his; and when he lowered his gaze, still with that intensity of vision piercing the future, her own eyes reflected the impersonalities of his; and in time he saw it.

XXIV

"We should all wear black for so mournful an occasion," said Rafaella Sal, spreading out her scarlet skirts.

"Father Abella is right. The occasion is sad enough without giving it the air of a funeral."

"Sad! Dios de mi alma! Will he return?"

Elena Castro shook her wise head. She was nearly twenty, and four years of matrimony had made her skeptical of man's capacity for romance. "Two years are long, and he will see many girls, and become one again of a life that is always more brilliant than our sun in May. His eyes will be dazzled, his mind distracted, full to the brim. To sit at table with the Tsar, to talk with him alone in his cabinet, to have for the asking audience of the Pope of Rome and the King of Spain! Ay yi! Ay yi! Perhaps he will be made a prince when he returns to St. Petersburg and all the beautiful princesses will want to marry him. Can he remember this poor little California, and even our lovely Concha? I doubt! Valgame Dios, I doubt!"

"Concha has always been too fortunate," said Rafaella with a touch of spite, for years of waiting had tried her temper and the sun always freckled her nose. The flower of California stood on the corridor of the Mission and before the church awaiting the guest of honor and his escort. A mass was to be said in behalf of the departing guests; the *Juno* would sail with the turn of the afternoon tide. Men and women were in their gayest finery, an exotic mass of color against the rough whitewashed walls, chattering as vivaciously as if the burden of their conversation were not regret for the Chamberlain and his gay young lieutenants. Concha, alone, wore no color; her frock was white, her mantilla black. She stood somewhat apart, but although she was pale she commanded her eyes to dwell absently on the shifting sand far down the valley, her haughty Spanish profile betraying nothing of the despair in her soul.

"Yes, Concha has always been too fortunate," repeated Rafaella. "Why should she be chosen for such a destiny—to go to the Russian court and wear a train ten yards long of red velvet embroidered with gold, a white veil spangled with gold, a head-dress a foot high set so thick with

jewels her head will ache for a week—Madre de Dios! And we stay here forever with white walls, horsehair furniture, Baja California pearls and three silk dresses a year!"

"No one in all Russia will look so grand in court dress as our Conchita," said Elena loyally. "But I doubt if it is the dress and the state she thinks of losing to-day. She will not talk even to me of him— Ay yi! she grows more reserved every day, our Concha!—except to say she will wed him when he returns, and that I know, for did not I witness the betrothal? She only mocks me when I beg her to tell me if she loves him, languishes, or sings a bar of some one of our beautiful songs with ridiculous words. But she does. She did not sleep last night. Her room is next to mine. No, it is of Rezánov she thinks, and always. Those proud silent girls, who jest when others would weep and use many words and must die without sympathy—they have tragedy in their souls, ay yi! And you think she is fortunate? True she is beautiful, she is La Favorita, she receives many boxes from Mexico, and she has won the love of this Russian. But—I have not dared to remind her—I remembered it only yesterday—she came into this world on the thirteenth of a

month, and he into her life but one day before the thirteenth of another—new style! True some might say that it was an escape, but if he came on the twelfth, it was on the thirteenth she began to love him—on the night of the ball; of that I am sure."

Rafaella shuddered and crossed herself. "Poor Concha! Perhaps in the end she will always stand apart like that. Truly she is not as others. I have always said it. Thanks be to Mary it was Luis that wooed me, not the Russian, for I might have been tempted. True his eyes are blue, and only the black could win my heart. But the court of St. Petersburg! Dios de mi vida! Did I lie awake at night and think of Concha Argüello in red velvet and jewels all over, I should hate her. But no—to-day—I cannot. Two years! Have I not waited six? It is eternity when one loves and is young."

"They come," said Elena.

The cavalcade was descending the sand hills on the left, Rezánov in full uniform between the Comandante and Luis Argüello and followed by a picked escort of officers from Presidio and Fort. The Californians wore full-dress uniform of white and scarlet, Don José, a blue velvet serape, embroidered in gold with the arms of Spain.

As they dismounted Rezánov bowed ceremoniously to the party on the corridor, and they returned his salutation gravely, suddenly silent. He walked directly over to Concha.

"We will go in together," he said. "It matters nothing what they think. I kneel beside no one else."

And Concha, with the air of leading an honored guest to the banquet, turned and walked with him into the dark little church.

"Why did you not wear a white mantilla?" he whispered. "I do not like that black thing."

"I am not a bride. I knew we should kneel together—it would have been ridiculous. And I could not wear a colored reboso to-day."

"I should have liked to fancy we were here for our nuptials. Delusions pass but are none the less sweet for that."

They knelt before the altar, the Comandante, Doña Ignacia, Luis, Santiago, Rafaella Sal and Elena Castro just behind; the rest of the party, their bright garments shimmering vaguely in the gloom, as they listed; and enough fervent prayers went up to insure the health and safety of the departing guests for all their lives.

Rezánov, who had much on his mind, stared

moodily at the altar until Concha, who had bowed her head almost to her knees, finished her supplication, when their eyes turned and met simultaneously. For a moment their brains did swim in the delusion that the priest with his uplifted hands pronounced benediction upon their nuptials, that probation was over and union nigh. But Father Abella dismissed all with the same blessing, and they shivered as they rose and walked slowly down the church.

Doña Ignacia took her husband's arm, and muttering that she feared a chill, hurried the others before her. The priests had gone to the sacristy. Before they reached the door Rezánov and Concha were alone.

His hands fell heavily on her shoulders.

"Concha," he said. "I shall come back if I live. I make no foolish vows, so idle between us. There is only one power that can prevent our marriage in this church not later than two years from to-day. And although I am in the very fulness of my health and strength, with my work but begun, and all my happiness in the future, and even to a less sanguine man it would seem that his course had many years to run, still have I seen as much as any man of the inconsequence of life, of

the insignificance of the individual, his hopes, ambitions, happiness, and even usefulness, in the complicated machinery of natural laws. It may be that I shall not come back. But I wish to take with me your promise that if I have not returned at the end of two years or you have received no reason for my detention, you will believe that I am dead. There would be but one insupportable drop in the bitterness of death, the doubt of your faith in my word and my love. Are you too much of a woman to curb your imagination in a long unbroken silence?"

"I have learned so much that one lesson more is no tax on my faith. And I no longer live in a world of little things. I promise you that I shall never falter nor doubt."

He bent his head and kissed her for the first time without passion, but solemnly, as had their nuptials indeed been accomplished, and the greater mystery of spiritual union isolated them for a moment in that twilight region where the mortal part did not enter.

As they left the church they saw that all the Indians of the Mission and neighborhood, in a gala of color, had gathered to cheer the Russians as they rode away. Concha was to return as

she had come, beside the carreta of her mother, and as Rezánov mounted his horse she stood staring with unseeing eyes on the brilliant animated scene. Suddenly she heard a suppressed sob, and felt a touch on her skirt. She looked round and saw Rosa, kneeling close to the church. For a moment she continued to stare, hardly comprehending, in the intense concentration of her faculties, that tangible beings, other than herself and Rezánov, still moved on the earth. Then her mind relaxed. She was normal in a normal world once more. She stooped and patted the hands clasping her skirts.

"Poor Rosa!" she said. "Poor Rosa!"

Over the intense green of islands and hills were long banners of yellow and purple mist, where the wild flowers were lifting their heads. The whole quivering bay was as green as the land, but far away the mountains of the east were pink. Where there was a patch of verdure on the sand hills the warm golden red of the poppy flaunted in the sunshine. All nature was in gala attire like the Californians themselves, as the *Juno* under full sail sped through "The Mouth of the Gulf of the Farallones." Fort San Joaquin saluted with seven

guns; the *Juno* returned the compliment with nine. The Comandante, his family and guests, stood on the hill above the fort, cheering, waving sombreros and handkerchiefs. Wind and tide carried the ship rapidly out the straits. Rezánov dropped the cocked hat he had been waving and raised his field-glass. Concha, as ever, stood a little apart. As the ship grew smaller and the company turned toward the Presidio, she advanced to the edge of the bluff. The wind lifted her loosened mantilla, billowing it out on one side, and as she stood with her hands pressed against her heart, she might, save for her empty arms, have been the eidolon of the Madonna di San Sisto. In her eyes was the same expression of vague arrested horror as she looked out on that world of menacing imperfections the blind forces of nature and man had created; her body was instinct with the same nervous leashed impotent energy.

XXV

The white rain clouds, rolling as ever like a nervous intruder over the great snow peaks behind the steep hills black with forest that rose like a wall behind the little settlement of Sitka, parted for a moment and the sun, a coy disdainful guest, flung a glittering mist over what Nature had intended to be one of the most enchanting spots on earth, until, in a fit of ill-temper—with one of the gods, no doubt—she gave it to Niobe as a permanent outlet for her discontent. When it does not rain at Sitka it pours, and when once in a way she draws a deep breath of respite and lifts her grand and glorious face to the sun, in pathetic gratitude for dear infrequent favor, comes a wild flurry of snow or a close white fog from the inland waters; and like a great beauty condemned to wear a veil through life she can but stare in dumb resentment through the folds, consoling herself with the knowledge that could the world but see it must surely worship. Perhaps, who knows? she really is a frozen goddess, condemned to the veil for infidelity to him imprisoned in the great

volcano across the sound—who sends up a column of light once in a way to dazzle her shrouded eyes, and failing that batters her with rock and stone like any lover of the slums. One day he spat forth a rock like a small hill, and big enough to dominate the strip of lowland at least, standing out on the edge of the island like a guard at the gates, and never a part of the alien surface. Between this lofty rock and the forest was the walled settlement of New Archangel, that Baránhov, the dauntless, had wrested from the bloodthirsty Kolosh but a short time since and purposed to hold in the interest of the Russian-American Company. His log hut, painted like the other buildings with a yellow ochre found in the soil, stood on the rock, and his glass swept the forest as often as the sea.

As Rezánov, on the second of July, thirty-one days after leaving San Francisco, sailed into the harbor with its hundred bits of volcanic woodland weeping as ever, he gave a whimsical sigh in tribute to the gay and ever-changing beauties of the southern land, but was in no mood for sentimental reminiscence. Natives, paddling eagerly out to sea in their bidarkas to be the first to bring in good news or bad, had given him a report cov-

ering the period of his absence that filled him with dismay. There had been deaths from scurvy; one of the largest ships belonging to the Company had been wrecked and the entire cargo lost; of a hunting party of three hundred Aleuts in one hundred and forty bidarkas, which had gone from Sitka to Kadiak in November of the preceding year, not one had arrived at its destination, and there was reason to believe that all had been drowned or massacred; and the Russians and Aleuts at Behring's Bay settlement had been exterminated by one of the native tribes.

But the *Juno* was received with salvos of artillery from the fort, and cheered by the entire population of the settlement, crowded on the beach. Baránhov, looking like a monkey with a mummy's head in which only a pair of incomparably shrewd eyes still lived, his black wig fastened on his bald red-fringed pate with a silk handkerchief tied under his chin, stood, hands on hips, shaking with excitement and delight. The bearded long-haired priests, in full canonicals of black and gold, were beside the Chief-Manager, ready to escort the Chamberlain to the chapel at the head of the solitary street, where the bells were pealing and a mass of thanksgiving was to be said for his safe return.

But it was some time before Rezánov could reach the chapel or even exchange salutations with Baránhov. As he stepped on shore he was surrounded, almost hustled by the shouting crowd of Russians—many of them convicts—Aleuts and Sitkans, who knelt at his feet, endeavored to kiss his hand, his garments, in their hysterical gratitude for the food he had brought them. For the first time he felt reconciled to his departure from California, and Concha's image faded as he looked at the tearful faces of the diseased ill-nourished wretches who gave their mite of life that he might live as became a great noble of the Russian Empire. But although he tingled with pleasure and was deeply moved, he by no means swelled with vanity, for he was far too clear-sighted to doubt he had done more than his duty, or that his duty was more than begun. He made them a little speech, giving his word they should be properly fed hereafter, that he would make the improvement of their condition as well as that of all the employees of the Company throughout this vast chain of settlements on the Pacific, the chief consideration of his life; and they believed him and followed him to the chapel rejoicing, reconciled for once to their lot.

After the service Rezánov went up to the hut of the Chief-Manager, a habitation that leaked winter and summer, and was equally deficient in light ventilation and order. But Baránhov in the sixteen years of his exile had forgotten the bare lineaments of comfort, and devoted his days to advancing the interests of the Company, his nights, save when sleep overcame him, to potations that would have buried an ordinary man under Alaskan snows long before. But Baránhov had fourteen years more of good service in him, and rescued the Company from insolvency again and again, nor ever played into the hands of marauding foreigners; with brain on fire he was shrewder than the soberest.

He listened with deep satisfaction to the Chamberlain's account of his success with the Californians and his glowing pictures of the country, nodding every few moments with emphatic approval. But as the story finished his wonderful eyes were two bubbling springs of humor, and Rezánov, who knew him well, recrossed his legs nervously.

"What is it?" he asked. "What have I done now? Remember that you have been in this business for sixteen years, and I one——"

"How many measures of corn did you say you had brought, Excellency?"

"Two hundred and ninety-four," replied Rezánov proudly.

"A provision that exceeds my most sanguine hopes. The only thing that mitigates my satisfaction is that there is not a mill in the settlement to grind it."

Rezánov sprang to his feet with a violent exclamation, his face very red. There was no one whose good opinion he valued as he did that of this brilliant, dissipated, disinterested old genius; and he felt like a schoolboy. But although he started for the door, he recovered half-way, and reseating himself joined in the laughter of the little man who was rocking back and forth on his bench, his weazened leg clasped against his shrunken chest.

"How on earth was I to know all your domestic arrangements?" he said testily. "God knows I found them limited enough last winter, but it never occurred to me there was any mysterious process involved in converting corn into meal. Is it quite useless, then?"

"Oh, no, we can boil or roast it. It will dispose of what teeth we have left, but that will serve the

good purpose of reminding us always of your excellency's interest in our welfare."

Rezánov shrugged his shoulders. "Give the corn to the natives. It is farinaceous at all events. And you can have nothing to say against the flour I have brought, and the peas, beans, tallow, butter, barley, salt, and salted meats—in all to the value of twenty-four thousand Spanish dollars."

The Chief-Manager's head nodded with the vigor and rapidity of a mechanical toy. "It is a God-send, a God-send. If you did no more than that you would have earned our everlasting gratitude. It will make us over, give us renewed courage in this cursed existence. Are you not going to get me out of it?"

Rezánov shook his head with a smile. "Literally you are the whole Company. As long as I live here you stay—although when I reach St. Petersburg I shall see that you receive every possible reward and honor."

Baránhov lifted his shoulders to his ears in quizzical resignation. "I suppose it matters little where the last few years left me are spent, and I can hang the medals on the walls to console me when I have rheumatism, and shout my titles from the top of the fort when the Kolosh are yelling at the barricades."

"You must make yourself more comfortable," said Rezánov emphatically. "You are wrong to carry your honesty and enthusiasm to the point of living like the promuschleniki. Take enough of their time to build you a comfortable dwelling, and I will send you, on my own account, far more substantial rewards than orders and titles. Build a big house, for that matter. I shall be here more or less—when I am not in California." And he told Baránhov of his proposed marriage with the daughter of Don José Argüello.

The Chief-Manager listened to this confidence with an even livelier satisfaction than to the list of the *Juno's* cargo.

"We shall have California yet!" he cried, his eyes snapping like live coals under the black thatch of wig. "Absorption or the bayonet. It matters little. Ten years from now and we will have a line of settlements as far south as San Diego. My plan was to feel my way down the northern coast of California with a colony, which should buy a tract of land from the natives and engage immediately in otter hunting—somewhere between Cape Mendocino and Drake's Bay. The Spanish have no settlements above San Francisco and are too weak to drive us out. They would

rage and bluster and do nothing. Then quietly push forward, building forts and ships. But you have taken hold in the grand manner and will accomplish in ten years what would have taken me fifty. Marry this girl, use your advantage over the entire family—whose influence I well know—and that great personal power with which the Almighty has been so lavish, and you will have the whole weakly garrisoned country under your foot before they know where they are, and the Russian settlers pouring in. Spain cannot come to the rescue while this devil Bonaparte is alive, and he is young, and like yourself a favorite of destiny. Those damned Bostonians inherit the grabbing instincts of the too paternal race they have just rejected, but there are thousands of miles of desert between California and their own western outposts, hundreds of savage tribes to exterminate. By the time they were in a position to attempt the occupation of California we should be so securely entrenched they would either let us alone or send troops that would be half dead by the time they reached us. As to ships, we could soon build enough at Okhotsk and Petropaulovsky for our purpose. For the matter of that, if your gifted tongue impressed the Tsar

with the riches of California there would always be war ships on her coast." He leaned forward and caught the strong shoulders above him in hands that looked like a tangle of baked nerves, and shook them vigorously. "You are a great boy!" he said with a sort of quizzical solemnity. "A great boy. This damned, God-forsaken, pestilential, demoralizing, brutalizing factory for enriching a few with the very life blood and vitals of thousands that will suffer and starve and never be heard of" (all his language cannot be recorded), "will make two or three reputations by the way. Mine will be one, although I'll get nothing else. Shelikov is safe; but you will have a monument. Well, God bless you. I grudge you nothing. Not even the happiness you deserve and are bound to have—for when all is said and done, Rezánov, you are a lucky dog, a lucky dog! Any man may see that, even when these infernal snows have left him with but half an eye. To quarrel with a destiny like yours would be as wise as to protest because California is warm and fertile, while this infernal north is like living in a refrigerator with the deluge to vary the monotony. Now let us get drunk!"

But Rezánov laughingly extricated himself, and

sending a message to Davidov and Khostov to come to him immediately, walked toward the tent he had ordered erected on the edge of the settlement; only the worst of weather drove him indoors in these half-civilized communities.

As he was passing the chapel, followed again by the employees of the Company, to whom he had granted a holiday, he suddenly found his hand taken possession of, and looked up to see himself confronted by a dissipated-looking person in plain clothes. His hand became so limp that it was dropped as if it had put forth a sting, and he narrowed his eyes and demanded with a bend of his mouth that brought the blood to the face of the intruder:

"And who are you, may I ask?"

The man threw back his head defiantly. "I am Lieutenant Sookin of the Imperial Navy of Russia," he said in a loud defiant tone.

"And I am Chamberlain of the Russian Court and Commander of all America," replied Rezánov coolly. "Now go to your quarters, dress yourself in your uniform, and present your report to me an hour hence."

The officer, concentrating in his injected eyes all the lively hatred and jealousy of his service

for the Russian-American Company in this region where it reigned supreme and cared no more for the Admiralty than for some native chieftain covered with shells and war-paint, glared at its plenipotentiary as if calling upon his deeper resources of insolence; but the steady contemptuous gaze of the man who had dealt with his kind often and successfully overcame his sodden spirit and he turned sulkily and slouched off to his quarters to console himself with more brandy. Rezánov shrugged his shoulders and went on to his tent.

There was no furniture in it as yet, and he was obliged to receive Davidov and Khostov standing, but this he preferred. They followed him almost immediately, apprehensive and nervous, and before speaking he looked at them for a moment with his strong penetrating gaze. He well knew the power of his own personality, and that it was immeasurably enhanced by the fact that of all with whom he had to do in these benighted regions his will alone was never weakened by liquor. These young men, clever, high-bred, with an honorable record not only in Russia but in England and America, looked upon a hilarious night as the just reward of work well done by day. Brandy was debited to their account by the "bucket" (a

bucket being a trifle less than two gallons), and they found little fault with life. But it gave a commanding spirit like Rezánov's an advantage which they did not underestimate for a moment; and they alternately hated and worshipped him.

"I think you have an inkling of what I am going to ask you to do." The Chamberlain brought out the euphemism with the utmost suavity. "I have made up my mind not to leave the indignity to which Russia was subjected last year by Japan without such punishment as it is in my power to inflict at present. It was my intention to build a flotilla here, but owing to the diseased condition and reduced numbers of the employees, that was impossible, and I shall be obliged to content myself with the *Juno* and the *Avos,* whose keel, as you know, was laid in November, and is no doubt finished long since. These I shall fit with armaments in Okhotsk. I shall place the enterprise I have spoken of in your charge, sailing with you from Sitka five days hence. From Okhotsk I desire that you proceed to the Japanese settlements in the lower Kurile Islands, take possession of them and bring all stores and as many of the inhabitants as the vessels will accommodate, to Sitka, where Baránhov will see that they are

comfortably established on that large island in the harbor—which we shall call Japonsky—and converted into good servants of the Company. The excuse for this enterprise is that those islands were formally taken possession of by Shelikov; and although abandoned later, the fact remains that the Russian flag was the first to float over them. The stores captured may not be worth much and the islands are of no particular use to us, but it is wise that Japan should have a taste of Russian power; and the consequences may be salutary in more ways than one. I hope you will do me this great favor, for there is no one of your tried probity and skill to whom I can trust so delicate an enterprise. I am doing it wholly upon my own responsibility, for although I wrote tentatively to the Tsar on this subject before I sailed for California, it is not yet time for a reply. However, I take the consequences upon my own shoulders. You shall not suffer in any way, for your orders are to obey mine while you remain in these waters."

He paused a moment, and then suddenly smiled into the unresponsive faces before him. He held out his hand and shook their limp ones warmly.

"Let me thank you here for all your inesti-

mable services in the past, and particularly during our late hazardous voyages. Be sure that whether you succeed in this enterprise or not, your rewards shall be no less for what you have already done. I shall make it a personal matter with the Tsar. You shall have promotion and a substantial increase in pay, besides the orders and Imperial thanks you so richly deserve. Lest anything happen to me on my homeward journey, I shall write to St. Petersburg before I leave."

The lieutenants, overcome as ever when he chose to put forth his full powers, assured him of their fidelity and, if with misgivings, vowed to mete vengeance to the Japanese. And although their misgivings were not unfounded, and they paid a high price in suffering and mortification, they accomplished their object and in due course received the rewards the Chamberlain had promised them.

They did not retire, and Rezánov, seeing their sudden hesitation and embarrassment, felt a sudden thrill of apprehension.

"What is it?" he demanded. "What has happened?"

"Life has moved slowly in Sitka during your absence, Excellency," replied Davidov. "There

has been little work done on the *Avos*. It will not be finished for a month or six weeks."

Then, had the young men been possessed by a not infrequent mood, they would have glowed with a sense of just satisfaction. Rezánov felt himself turn so white that he wheeled about and left the tent. A month or six weeks! And the speed and safety of his journey across Siberia depended upon his making the greater part of it before the heavy autumn rains swelled the rivers and flooded the swamps. Winter or summer the journey from Okhotsk to St. Petersburg might be made in four months; with the wealth and influence at his command, possibly in less; but in the deluge between he was liable to detentions lasting nearly as long again, to say nothing of illness caused by inevitable exposure. He stood staring at the palisades for many minutes. The separation must be long enough, the dangers numerous enough if he started within the week, but at least he had in a measure accustomed himself to the idea of not seeing Concha again for "the best part of two years," and the sanguineness of his temperament had led him to hope that the time might be reduced to eighteen months. If he delayed too long, only by means of an unpre-

cedented run of good fortune would he reach St. Petersburg but a month behind his calculations. And the chances were in favor of four, or three at the best! Never since the morning that the real nature of his feeling for Concha had declared itself had he yearned toward her as at that moment; never since the dictum of what she called their "tribunal" had he so rebelled against the long delay. And yet he hesitated. To leave Japan unpunished for the senseless humiliations to which it had subjected Russia in his person was not to be thought of, and yet did he leave without seeing the *Avos* finished, the two boats supplied with armaments at Okhotsk, and under way before he started across Siberia, he knew it was doubtful if the expedition took place before his return; in that case might never take place, for these two young men might have drifted elsewhere, and he knew of no one else to whom he could entrust such a commission. In spite of their idiosyncrasies he could trust them implicitly—up to a certain point. That point involved keeping them in sight until exactly the right moment and leaving nothing to their executive which could be certainly accomplished by himself alone. Did he sail five days hence on the *Juno* one of the officers

would be exposed for an indeterminate time to the temptations of Okhotsk, the ship, perhaps, at the mercy of some sudden requirement of the Company. His authority was absolute when enforced in person, but it was a proverb west of the Ural: "God reigns and the Tsar is far away." If the *Juno* were wanted the manager at Okhotsk would argue that two years was a period in which an ardent servant of the Company could find many an excuse to justify its seizure.

And here in Sitka it was doubtful if the work on the *Avos* proceeded at all. Baránhov was not in sympathy with the enterprise against the Japanese, fearing the consequences to himself in the event of the Tsar's disapproval, and resenting the impressment of the promuschleniki into a service that deprived him of their legitimate work. Moreover, although he loved Rezánov personally, he had enjoyed supreme power in the wilderness too long not to chafe under even the temporary assumption of authority by his high-handed superior. With the best of intentions Davidov could make little headway against the passive resistance of the Chief-Manager, and those intentions would be weakened by the consolations the Company so generously afforded.

The result was hardly open to doubt. If he left Sitka before the completion of the *Avos,* Russia would go unavenged for the present. Or himself? Rezánov, sanguine and imaginative as he was, even to the point of creating premises to rhyme with ends, was very honest fundamentally. He turned abruptly on his heel, and calling to the officers that he would announce his decision on the morrow, ordered the sentry to open the gate and passed out of the enclosure.

He crossed the clearing and entered the forest. The warlike tribes themselves had trodden paths through the dense undergrowth of young trees and ferns. Rezánov, despite Baránhov's warning, had tramped the forest many times. It was the one thing that reconciled him to Sitka, for there are few woods more beautiful. In spite or because of the incessant rains, it is pervaded by a rich golden gloom, the result of the constant rotting of the brown and yellow bark, not only on the prostrate trees, but of the many killed by crowding and unable to seek the earth with the natural instinct of death. And above, the green of hemlock and spruce was perennially fresh and young, glistening and fragrant. Here and there was a small clearing where the

clans had erected their ingenious and hideous totem poles, out of place in the ancient beauty of the wood.

The ferns brushed his waist, the roar of the river came to his ears, the forest had never looked more primeval, more wooing to a man burdened with civilization, but Rezánov gave it less heed than usual, although he had turned to it instinctively. He was occupied with a question to which Nature would turn an aloof disdainful ear. Was his own wounded vanity at the root of his desire to humiliate Japan? Russia was too powerful, too occupied, for the present at least, greatly to care that her overtures and presents had been scorned. Upon her ambassador had fallen the full brunt of that wearisome and incomparably mortifying experience, and unfortunately the ambassador happened to be one of the proudest and most autocratic men in her empire. No man of Rezánov's calibre but accommodates that sort of personal vanity that tenaciously resents a blow to the pride of which it is a part, to the love of power it feeds. As well expect a lover without passion, a state without corruption. Rezánov finally shrugged his shoulders and admitted the impeachment, but at the same time he recognized that the

desire for vengeance still held, and that the tenacity of his nature, a tenacity that had been no mean factor in the remodelling of himself from a voluptuous young sprig of nobility into one of the most successful business men and subjugators of other men that the Russian Empire could show, was not likely to weaken when its very roots had been stiff with purpose for fifteen months. Power had been Rezánov's ruling passion for many years before he met Concha Argüello, and although it might mate very comfortably with love, it was not to be expected that it would remain submerged beyond the first enthusiasm, nor even assume the position of the "party of the second part." Rezánov was Rezánov. He was also in that interval between youth and age when the brain rules if it is ever to rule at all. That the ardor of his nature had awakened refreshed after a long sleep was but just proven, as well as the revival of his early ideals and capacity for genuine love; but the complexities, the manifold interests and desires of the ego had been growing and developing these many years; and no mere mortal that has given up his life for a considerable period to the thirst for dominance can ever, save in a brief exaltation, sacrifice it to anything

so normal as the demands of sex and spirit. For good or ill, the man who has burned with ambition, exulted in the exercise of power, bitterly resented the temporary victories of rivals and enemies, fought with all the resources of brain and character against failure, is in a class apart from humanity in the mass. Rezánov loved Concha Argüello to the very depths of his soul, but he had lived beyond the time when even she could engage successfully with the ruthless forces that had moulded into immutable shape the Rezánov she knew. Her place was second, and it is probable that she would have loved him less had it been otherwise; she, in spite of her fine intellect and strong will, being all woman, as he, despite his depth of intuition, was all man. Equality is possible in no relation or condition of life. When woman subjugates man the conquered will enjoy a sense of revenge proportionate to the meanness of his state.

It is possible that had Concha awaited Rezánov in St. Petersburg her attraction would have focused his desires irresistibly; but his mind had resigned itself to the prospect of separation for a definite period, and while it had not relegated her image to the background, her part in his life

had been settled there among many future possibilities, and all the foreground was crowded with the impatient symbols of the intervening time. Moreover, he well knew that the savor would be gone from his happiness with the woman were the taste of another failure acrid in his mouth.

As he realized that the die was cast, the sanguineness of his temperament rushed to do battle against apprehension and self-accusing. After all, he was rarely balked of his way, accustomed to ride down obstacles, to the amiable coöperation of fate. He could arrive in Okhotsk late in September or early in October. Captain D'Wolf, who had been detained at Sitka during his absence by the same indifference that had operated against the completion of the *Avos*, would precede him and order that all be in readiness at Okhotsk both for the ships and his journey to Yakutsk. He could proceed at once; and no doubt with twice the number of horses needed would make the first and most difficult stage of the journey in the usual time, and with no great embarrassment from the rains. From Yakutsk to Irkutsk the greater part of the travel was by water in any case, and after that the land was flat for the most part and bridges were more numerous. The gov-

ernor of every town in Siberia would be his obsequious servant, the entire resources of the country would be at his disposal. He was sound in health again, as resistant against hardships as when he had sailed from Kronstadt. And God knew, he thought with a sigh, his will and purpose had never been stronger.

XXVI

Rezanov disembarked from the *Juno* at Okhotsk during the first days of October. Had it not been for a touch of fever that had returned in the filth and warm dampness of Sitka he would have felt almost as buoyant in mind and body as in those days when California had gone to his head. The *Juno* had touched at Kadiak, Oonalaska, and others of the more important settlements, and he had found his schools and libraries in good condition, seals and otters rapidly increasing in their immunity from indiscriminate slaughter, new and stronger forts threatening the nefarious Bostonian and Briton. At Okhotsk he learned that the embassy of Count Golofkin to China had failed as signally as his own, and this alone would have put him in the best of tempers even had he not found his armament and caravan awaiting him, facilitating his immediate departure. He wrote a gay letter to Concha giving her the painful story of the naturalist attached to the Golofkin embassy, Dr. Redovsky, who had remained in the east animated by the same scien-

tific enthusiasm as that of his colleague, the good Langsdorff; parted some time since from his too exacting master. Rezánov had written Concha many letters during his detention in Sitka, and left them with Baránhov to send at the first opportunity. The Chief-Manager, deeply interested in the romance of the mighty Chamberlain with whom he alone dared to take a liberty, vowed to guard all that came to his care and sooner or later to send them to California. Rezánov had also written comprehensively to the Tsar and the directors of the Russian-American Company, adroitly placing his marriage in the light of a diplomatic manœuvre, and painting California in colors the more vivid and enticing for the sullen clouds and roaring winds, the dripping forests and eternal snows of that unknown corner of Earth where he had been stranded so long. He had also, when Langsdorff announced his intention to start upon a difficult journey in the interest of science, provided him not only with letters of recommendation, but with all the comforts procurable in a land where the word comfort was the stock in trade of the local satirist. But Langsdorff, although punctiliously acknowledging the favors, never quite forgave the indifference of a mere am-

bassador and chamberlain, rejoicing in the dignity of an honorary membership in the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, to the supreme division of natural history.

The first stage of the journey—from Okhotsk to Yakutsk—was about six hundred and fifty English miles, not as the crow flew, but over the Stanovoi mountains in a southwesterly direction to the Maya river, along the latter's wavering course to the Youdoma, then northwest to the Aldan, and south along the Lena. The beaten track lay entirely alongside the rivers at this season, upon their surface in winter; and besides these great streams there were many too unimportant for the map, but as erratic in course and as irresistible in energy after the first rains of autumn.

Captain D'Wolf had proved himself capable and faithful, and a caravan of forty horses had been in Okhotsk a week: twenty for immediate use, twenty for relief, or substitutes in almost certain emergency. As there were but one or two stations of any importance between Okhotsk and Yakutsk, and as a week might pass without the shelter of so much as a hut, it was necessary to take tents and bearskin beds for the

Chamberlain, his Cossack guard, valet-de-chambre, cook and other servants, one set of fine blankets and linen, cooking utensils, axes, arms, tinder-boxes, provisions for the entire trip, besides a great quantity of personal luggage.

Rezánov lost no time. He had changed his original plan and dispatched Davidov on the *Avos* from Oonalaska. Guns and provisions awaited the *Juno* at Okhotsk, and in less than a week after his arrival Rezánov was able to start on his long journey with a mind at rest. Although the almost extravagant delight that his body had taken in the comforts of his manager's home, after ten weeks on the *Juno,* warned him that he might be in a better condition to start on a journey of ten thousand versts, he hearkened neither to the hint nor to the insistence of his host. His impatient energy and stern will, combined with the passionate wish to accomplish the double object of his journey, returning in the least possible time to California with his treaty and the consent of the Pope and King to his marriage, would have carried him out of Okhotsk in forty-eight hours had disease declared itself. Nor were there any inducements aside from a comfortable bed and refined fare, in the flat unhealthy

town with its everlasting rattle of chains, and the hideous physiognomies of criminals always at work to the rumbling accompaniment of Cossack oaths.

For the first week the exercise he loved best and the long days in the crisp open air renewed his vigor, and he even looked forward to the four months of what was then the severest travelling in the world, in a boyish spirit of adventure. He reflected that he might as well give his brain a relief from the constant revolving of schemes and plans for the advancement of his country, his company, and himself, and let his thoughts have their carnival of anticipation with the unparalleled happiness and success that awaited him in the future. There was no possible doubt of the acquiescence and assistance of the Tsar, and no man ever looked down a fairer prospective than he, as he galloped over the ugly country, often far ahead of his caravan, splashing through bogs and streams, fording rivers without ferries, camping at night in forests so dense the cold never escaped their embrace, muffled to the eyes in furs as he made his way past valleys whose eternal ice fields chilled the country for miles about; sometimes able to procure a little fresh milk and butter,

oftener not; occasionally passing a caravan returning for furs, generally seeing nothing but a stray reindeer for hours together, once meeting the post and finding much for himself that in nowise dampened his spirit.

But on the eighth day the rains began; a fine steady mist, then in torrents as endless. Wrapped in bearskins at night within the shelter of a tent or of some wayside hut, and closely covered by day, Rezánov at first merely cursed the inconvenience of the rain; but while crossing the river Allach Juni, his guides without consulting him having taken him miles out of his way in order to avoid the hamlet of the same name where the smallpox was raging, but where there was a government ferry, his horse lost his footing in the rapid swollen current and fell. Rezánov managed to retain his seat, and pulled the frightened plunging beast to its feet while his Cossacks were still shouting their consternation. But he was soaked to the skin, his personal luggage was in the same condition, and they did not reach a hut where a fire could be made until nine hours later. It was then that the seeds of malaria, accumulated during the last three years in unsanitary ports and sown deep by exceptional hardships, but

which he believed had taken themselves off during his six weeks in California, stirred more vigorously than in Sitka or Okhotsk. He rode on the next day in a burning fever. Jón, minding Langsdorff's instructions, doctored him—not without difficulty—from the medicine chest, and for a day or two the fever seemed broken. But Jón, sick with apprehension, implored him to turn back. He might as well have implored the sky to turn blue.

"How do you think men accomplish things in this world?" asked Rezánov angrily. "By turning back and going to bed every time they have a migraine?"

"No, Excellency," said the man humbly. "But health is necessary to the accomplishment of everything, and if the body is eaten up with fever——"

"What are drugs for? Give me the whole damned pharmacopœia if you choose, but don't talk to me about turning back."

"Very well, Excellency," said the man with a sigh.

The next day he and one of the Cossack guard caught him as he fell from his horse unconscious. A Yakhut hut, miserable as it was, offered in the

persistent down-pour a better shelter than the tent. They carried him into it, and his bedding at least was almost as luxurious as had he been in St. Petersburg. Jón, at his wit's end, remembered the practice of Langsdorff in similar cases, and used the lancet, a heroic treatment he would never have accomplished had his master been conscious. The fever ebbed, and in a few days Rezánov was able to continue the journey by shorter stages, although heavy with an intolerable lassitude. But his will sustained him until he reached Yakutsk, not at the end of twenty-two days, but of thirty-three. Here he succumbed immediately, and although his sick-bed was in the comfortable home of the agent of the Company, and he had medical attendance of a sort, his fever and convalescence lasted for eight weeks. Then, in spite of the supplications of his friends, chief among whom was his faithful Jón, and the prohibition of the doctor, he began the second stage of his journey.

The road from Yakutsk to Irkutsk, some two thousand six hundred versts, or fifteen hundred and fifty English miles, lay for the most part alternately on and along the river Lena in a southeasterly direction; there being no attempt to cross

Siberia at any point in a straight line. By this time the river was frozen, and the only concession Rezánov would make to his enfeebled frame was an arrangement to cover the entire journey by private sledge instead of employing the swifter course of post sledge on the long stretches and horseback on the shorter cuts.

The weather was now intensely cold, the river winding, the delays many, but there were adequate stations for the benefit and accommodation of travellers every hundred versts or less. Rezánov felt so invigorated by the long hours in the open after the barbarous closeness of his sick room, that at the end of a fortnight he was again possessed with all his old ardor of desire to reach the end of his journey. He vowed he was well again, abandoned his comfortable sledge and pushed on in the common manner. In the wretched post sledges he was often exposed to the full violence of a Siberian winter, and although the horseback exercise stirred his blood and refreshed him for the moment, he suffered in reaction and was several times forced to remain two nights instead of one at a station. But he was muffled in sables to his very eyes, and the road was diverting, often beautiful, with its Gothic mountains, its

white plains set with villages and farms, high thin crosses above the open or swelling domes of the little churches. Sometimes the Lena narrowed until its frozen surface looked like a mass of ice that had ground its way between perpendicular walls or overhanging masses of rock that awaited the next convulsion of nature to close the pass altogether. Then the dogs trotted past caves and grottos, left the abrupt and craggy banks, crossed level plains once more; where herds of cattle grazed in the summer time, now a vast uncheckered expanse of white. The Government and Company agents fawned upon him, the best of horses and beds, food and wine, were eagerly placed at the disposal of the favorite of the Tsar. Rezánov's spirit, always of the finest temper, suffered no eclipse for many days. He revelled in the belief that his sorely tried body was regenerating its old vigors.

From Wercholensk to Katschuk the journey was so winding by river that it consumed more than twice the time of the land route, which although only thirty versts in extent was one of the most difficult in Siberia. Rezánov chose the latter without hesitation, and would listen to no dissuasion from the Commissary of the little town or

from his distracted Jón: the journey from Yakutsk had now lasted five weeks and the servant's watchful eye noted signs of exhaustion.

The hills were very high and very steep, the roads but a name in summer. Had not the snow been soft and thin the horses could not have made the ascent at all; and as it was, the riders were forced to walk the greater part of the way and drag their unwilling steeds behind them. They were twelve hours covering the thirty versts, and at Katschuk Rezánov succumbed for two days, while Jón scoured the country in search of a telega; as sometimes happened there was a long stretch of country without snow, and sledges, by far the most comfortable method of travel in Siberia, could not be used. The rest of the journey, but one hundred and ninety-six versts, must be made by land. Rezánov admitted that he was too weary to ride, and refused to travel in the post carriage. On the third day the servant managed to hire a telega from a superior farmer and they started immediately, the heavy luggage having been consigned to a merchant vessel at Yakutsk.

Rezánov stood the telega exactly half a day. Little larger than an arm-chair and far lighter,

it was drawn by horses that galloped up and down hill and across the intervening valleys with no change of gait, and over a road so rough that the little vehicle seemed to be propelled by a succession of earthquakes. Rezánov, in a fever which he attributed to rage, dismissed the telega at a village and awaited the coming of Jón, who followed on horseback with the personal luggage.

It was a village of wooden houses built in the Russian fashion, and inhabited by a dignified tribe wearing long white garments bordered with fur. They spoke Russian, a language little heard farther north and east in Siberia, and when Rezánov declined their hospitality they dispatched a courier at once to the Governor-General of Irkutsk acquainting him with the condition of the Chamberlain and of his imminent arrival. In consequence, when Rezánov drew rein two days later and looked down upon the city of Irkutsk with its pleasant squares and great stone buildings beside the shining river, the gilded domes and crosses of its thirty churches and convents glittering in the sun, the whole picture beckoning to the delirious brain of the traveller like some mirage of the desert, his appearance was the signal for a salute from the fort; and the

Governor-General, privy counsellor and senator de Pestel, accompanied by the civil governor, the commandant, and the archbishop, and with a military escort, sallied forth and led the guest, with the formality of officials and the compassionate tenderness of men, into the capital.

For three weeks longer Rezánov lay in the palace of the Governor. Between fever and lassitude his iron will seemed alternately to melt in the fiery furnace of his body, then, a cooling but still viscous and formless mass, sink to the utmost depths of his being. But here he had the best of nursing and attendance, rallied finally and insisted upon continuing his journey. His doctor made the less demur as the travelling was far smoother now, in the early days of March, than it would be a month hence, when the snow was thinner and the sledges were no longer possible. Nevertheless, he announced his intention to accompany him as far as Krasnoiarsk, where the Chamberlain could lodge in the house of the principal magistrate of the place, Counsellor Keller, and be able to command fair nursing and medical attendance; and to this Rezánov indifferently assented.

The prospect of continuing his journey and the

bustle of preparation raised the spirits of the invalid and gave him a fictitious energy. He had fought depression and despair in all his conscious moments, never admitted that the devastation in his body was mortal. With but a remnant of his former superb strength, and emaciated beyond recognition, he attended a banquet on the night preceding his departure, and on the following morning stood up in his sledge and acknowledged the God-speed of the population of Irkutsk assembled in the square before the palace of the Governor. All his life he had excited interest wherever he went, but never to such a degree as on that last journey when he made his desperate fight for life and happiness.

XXVII

The snow rarely falls in Krasnoiarsk. It is a little oasis in the great winter desert of Siberia. Rezánov, his face turned to the window, could see the red banks on the opposite side of the river. The sun transformed the gilded cupolas and crosses into dazzling points of light, and the sky above the spires and towers, the stately square and narrow dirty streets of the bustling little capital, was as blue and unflecked as that which arched so high above a land where Castilian roses grew, and one woman among a gay and thoughtless people dreamed, with all the passion of her splendid youth, of the man to whom she had pledged an eternal troth. Rezánov's mind was clear in those last moments, but something of the serenity and the selfishness of death had already descended upon him. He heard with indifference the sobs of Jón, crouched at the foot of his bed. Tears and regrets were a part of the general futility of life, insignificant enough at the grand threshold of death.

No doubt that his great schemes would die with

him, and were he remembered at all it would be as a dreamer; or as a failure because he had died before accomplishing what his brain and energy and enthusiasm alone could force to fruition. None realized better than he the paucity of initiative and executive among the characteristics of the Slav. What mattered it? He had had glimpses more than once of the apparently illogical sequence of life, the vanity of human effort, the wanton cruelty of Nature. He had known men struck down before in the maturity of their usefulness, cities destroyed by earthquake or hurricane in the fairest and most promising of their days: public men, priests, parents, children, wantons, criminals, blotted out with equal impartiality by a brutal force that would seem to have but a casual use for the life she flung broadcast on her planets. Man was the helpless victim of Nature, a calf in a tiger's paws. If she overlooked him, or swept him contemptuously into the class of her favorites, well and good; otherwise he was her sport, the plaything of her idler moments. Those that cried "But why?" "What reason?" "What use?" were those that had never looked over the walls of their ego at the great dramatic moments in the career of Nature, when she made immortal fame for herself at the expense of millions of pigmies.

And if his energies, his talents, his usefulness, were held of no account, at least he could look back upon a past when he would have seemed to be one of the few supreme favorites of the forces that shaped man's life and destiny. Until he had started from Kronstadt four years before on a voyage that had humiliated his proud spirit more than once, and undermined as splendid a physique as ever was granted to even a Russian, he had rolled the world under his foot. With an appearance and personal magnetism, gifts of mind and manner and character that would have commanded attention amidst the general flaccidity of his race and conquered life without the great social advantages he inherited, he had enjoyed power and pleasure to a degree that would have spoiled a coarser nature long since. True, the time had come when he had cared little for any of his endowments save as a means to great ends, when all his energies had concentrated in the determination to live a life of the highest possible usefulness—without which man's span was but existence—his ambitions cohered and been driven steadily toward a permanent niche in history; then paled and dissolved for an hour in the glorious vision of human happiness.

And finally as he might realize man's insignificance among the blind forces of nature, he could accept it philosophically and die with his soul uncorroded by misanthropy, that final and uncompromising admission of failure. The misanthrope was the supreme failure of life because he had not the intelligence to realize, or could not reconcile himself to, the incomplete condition of human nature. Man was made up of little qualities, and aspirations for great ones. Many yielded in the struggle and sank into impotent discontent among the small material things of life, instead of uplifting themselves with the picture of the inevitable future when development had run its course, and indulgently pitying the children of his own period who so often made life hateful with their greed, selfishness, snobbery—most potent obstacle to human endeavor—and injustice. The bad judgment of the mass! How many careers it had balked, if not ruined, with its poor ideals, its mean heroes, its instinctive avoidance of superior qualities foreign to itself, its contemptible desire to be identified with a fashion. It was this low standard of the crowd that induced misanthropy in many otherwise brave spirits who lacked the insight to discern the divine spark underneath, the

persistence, sure of reward, to fight their way to this spark and reveal it to the gaze of astonished and flattered humanity. Rezánov's very arrogance had led him to regard the mass of mankind as but one degree removed from the nursery; his good nature and philosophical spirit to treat them with an indulgence that kept sourness out of his cynicism and inevitably recurring weariness and disgust; his ardent imagination had consoled itself with the vision of a future when man should live in a world made reasonable by the triumph of ideals that now lurked half ashamed in the high spaces of the human mind.

He looked back in wonder at the moment of wild regret and protest—the bitterer in its silence—when they had told him he must die; when in the last rally of the vital forces he had believed his will was still strong enough to command his ravaged body, to propel his brain, still teeming with a vast and complicated future, his heart, still warm and insistent with the image it cherished, on to the ultimates of ambition and love. How brief it had been, that last cry of mortality, with its accompaniment of furious wonder at his unseemly and senseless cutting off. In the adjustment and readjustment of political and natural

forces the world ambled on philosophically, fulfilling its inevitable destiny. If he had not been beyond humor he would have smiled at the idea that in the face of all eternity it mattered what nation on one little planet eventually possessed a fragment called California. To him that fair land was empty and purposeless save for one figure, and even of her he thought with the terrible calm of dissolution. During these last months of illness and isolation he had been less lonely than at any time of his life save during those few weeks in California, for he had lived with her incessantly in spirit; and in that subtle imaginative communion had pressed close to a profound and complex soul, revealed before only in flashes to a vision astray in the confusion of the senses. He had felt that her response to his passion was far more vital and enduring than dwelt in the capacity of most women; he had appreciated her gifts of mind, her piquant variousness that scotched monotony, the admirable characteristics that would give a man repose and content in his leisure, and subtly advance his career. But in those long reveries, at the head of his forlorn caravan or in the desolate months of convalescence, he had arrived at an absolute un-

derstanding of what she herself had divined while half comprehending. Theirs was one of the few immortal loves that reveal the rarely sounded deeps of the soul while in its frail tenement on earth; and he harbored not a doubt that their love was stronger than mortality and that their ultimate union was decreed. Meanwhile she would suffer, no one but he could dream how completely, but her strong soul would conquer, and she would live the life she had visioned in moments of despair; not of cloistered selfishness, but of incomparable usefulness to her little world; and far happier, in her eternal youthfulness of heart, in that divine life of the imagination where he must always be with her as she had known him briefly at his best, than in the blunt commonplaceness of daily existence, the routine and disillusionment of the world. Perhaps—who knew?—he had, after all, given her the best that man can offer to a woman of exalted nature; instead of taking again with his left hand what his right had bestowed; completed the great gift of life with the priceless beacon of death.

How unlike was life to the old Greek tragedies! He recalled his prophetic sense of impending hap-

piness, success, triumph, as he entered California, the rejuvenescence of his spirit in the renewal of his wasted forces even before he loved the woman. Every event of the past year, in spite of the obstacles that mortal must expect, had marched with his ambitions and desires, and straight toward a future that would have given him the most coveted of all destinies, a station in history. There had not been a hint that his brain, so meaningly and consummately equipped, would perish in the ruins of his body in less than a twelvemonth from that fragrant morning when he had entered the home of Concha Argüello tingling with a pagan joy in mere existence, a sudden rush of desire for the keen wild happiness of youth——

His eyes wandered from the bright cross above the little cemetery where he was to lie, and contracted with an expression of wonder. Where had Jón found Castilian roses in this barren land? No man had ever been more blest in a servant, but could even he—here— With the last triumph of will over matter he raised his head, his keen searching gaze noting every detail of the room, bare and unlovely save for its altar and ikons, its kneeling priests and nuns. His eyes expanded, his nostrils quivered. As he sank down in the em-

brace of that final delusion, his unconquerably sanguine spirit flared high before a vision of eternal and unthinkable happiness.

So died Rezánov; and with him the hope of Russians and the hindrance of Americans in the west; and the mortal happiness and earthly dross of the saintliest of California's women.

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